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(54) Title: GENETIC ENGINEERING SALT TOLERANCE IN CROP PLANTS			
(57) Abstract  The invention is isolated nucleic acid molecules encoding Na <sup>+</sup> /H <sup>+</sup> exchanger polypeptides for extrusion of monovalent cations (preferably lithium ions and potassium ions, most preferably sodium ions) from the cytosol of cells to provide the cell with increased salt tolerance. In a preferred embodiment, the nucleic acid is obtained from <i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i> . Crop species transformed with the nucleic acid molecule are capable of surviving in soil with high salt levels that would normally inhibit growth of the crop species.			

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**GENETIC ENGINEERING SALT TOLERANCE IN CROP PLANTS**  
**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application claims priority from U.S. application nos. 60/078,474 and 60/116,111, which are incorporated by reference herein in their entirety.

**5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Environmental stress due to salinity is one of the most serious factors limiting the productivity of agricultural crops, which are predominantly sensitive to the presence of high concentrations of salts in the soil. Large terrestrial areas of the world are affected by levels of salt inimical to plant growth. It is estimated that 35-45% of the 279 million  
10 hectares of land under irrigation is presently affected by salinity. This is exclusive of the regions classified as arid and desert lands, (which comprises 25% of the total land of our planet). Salinity has been an important factor in human history and in the life spans of agricultural systems. Salt impinging on agricultural soils has created instability and has frequently destroyed ancient and recent agrarian societies. The Sumerian culture  
15 faded as a power in the ancient world due to salt accumulation in the valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Large areas of the Indian subcontinent have been rendered unproductive through salt accumulation and poor irrigation practices. In this century, other areas, including vast regions of Australia, Europe, southwest USA, the Canadian prairies and others have seen considerable declines in crop productivity.

20 Although there is engineering technology available to combat this problem, though drainage and supply of high quality water, these measures are extremely costly. In most of the cases, due to the increased need for extensive agriculture, neither improved irrigation efficiency nor the installation of drainage systems is applicable. Moreover, in the arid and semi-arid regions of the world water evaporation exceeds  
25 precipitation. These soils are inherently high in salt and require vast amounts of irrigation to become productive. Since irrigation water contains dissolved salts and minerals, an application of water is also an application of salt that compounds the salinity problem.

Increasing emphasis is being given to modify plants to fit the restrictive growing  
30 conditions imposed by salinity. If economically important crops could be manipulated and made salt resistant, this land could be farmed resulting in greater sales of seed and greater yield of useful crops. Conventional breeding for salt tolerance has been attempted for a long time. These breeding practices have been based mainly on the following strategies: a) the use of wide crosses between crop plants and their more salt-

tolerant wild relatives [1], b) screening and selecting for variation within a particular phenotype [2], c) designing new phenotypes through recurrent selection [3]. The lack of success in generating tolerant varieties (given the low number of varieties released and their limited salt tolerance) [4] would suggest that conventional breeding practices are not enough and that in order to succeed a breeding program should include the engineering of transgenic crops [5].

Several biochemical pathways associated with stress tolerance have been characterized in different plants and a few of the genes involved in these processes have been identified and in some cases the possible role of proteins has been investigated in transgenic/overexpression experiments. Several compatible solutes have been proposed to play a role in osmoregulation under stress. Such compatible solutes, including carbohydrates [6], amino acids [7] and quaternary N-compounds [8] have been shown to increase osmoregulation under stress. Also, proteins that are normally expressed during seed maturation (LEAs, Late Embryogenesis Abundant proteins) have been suggested to play a role in water retention and in the protection of other proteins during stress. The overexpression of LEA in rice provided a moderate benefit to the plants during water stress [9,10]. A single gene (sod2) coding for a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport has been shown to confer sodium tolerance in fission yeast [11,12], although the role of this plasma membrane-bound protein appears to be only limited to yeast. One of the main disadvantages of using this gene for transformation of plants is associated with the typical problems encountered in heterologous gene expression, i.e. incorrect folding of the gene product, targeting of the protein to the target membrane and regulation of the protein function.

Plants that tolerate and grow in saline environments have high intracellular salt levels. A major component of the osmotic adjustment in these cells is accomplished by ion uptake. The utilization of inorganic ions for osmotic adjustment suggests that salt-tolerant plants must be able to tolerate high levels of salts within their cells. However, enzymes extracted from these plants show high sensitivity to salt. The sensitivity of the cytosolic enzymes to salt would suggest that the maintenance of low cytosolic sodium concentration, either by compartmentation in cell organelles or by exclusion through the plasma membrane, must be necessary if the enzymes in the cell are to be protected from the inimical effects of salt.

Plant cells are structurally well suited to the compartmentation of ions. Large membrane-bound vacuoles are the site for a considerable amount of sequestration of ions and other osmotically active substances. A comparison of ion distribution in cells

and tissues of various plant species indicates that a primary characteristic of salt tolerant plants is their ability to exclude sodium out of the cell and to take up sodium and to sequester it in the cell vacuoles. Transport mechanisms could actively move ions into the vacuole, removing the potentially harmful ions from the cytosol. These ions, in turn, could act as an osmoticum within the vacuole, which would then be responsible for maintaining water flow into the cell. Thus, at the cellular level both specific transport systems for sodium accumulation in the vacuole and sodium extrusion out of the cell are correlated with salt tolerance.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

We have isolated the first such system of intracellular salt management. We identified the presence of a functional vacuolar  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport in the vacuolar membrane of higher plants [13,14,15,16,17,18].

We have demonstrated the  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport function in isolated tonoplast membranes and in intact vesicles and we showed that the activity of antiport molecules was salt dependent. Neither a protein sequence nor a gene encoding the antiport were identified in previously published work. We have now identified nucleic acid molecules coding for plant  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiports, the nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides produced by the nucleic acid molecules being the subject of the present invention. These polypeptides are useful for the extrusion of sodium ions from the cytosol, either through the accumulation of sodium ions into the vacuoles or into the extracellular space, thus providing the most important trait for salt tolerance in plants. These nucleic acid molecules, preferably genes, are useful for the engineering of salt tolerant plants by transformation of salt-sensitive crops overexpressing one or more of these nucleic acid molecules under the control of constitutively active promoters or under the control of conditionally-induced promoters. Agrobacterium tumefaciens-mediated transformation or particle-bombardment-mediated transformation are useful for depending upon the plant species.

The invention includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a PNHX transporter polypeptide, or a fragment of a polypeptide having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.

The invention also relates to an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a THX transporter polypeptide, PNHX transporter polypeptide, or a fragment of a polypeptide having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell, comprising a nucleic acid molecule selected from the group consisting of:

- 5 (a) a nucleic acid molecule that hybridizes to all or part of a nucleic molecule in [SEQ ID NO:1], [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:17], [SEQ ID NO:19], or a complement thereof under moderate or high stringency hybridization conditions, wherein the nucleic acid molecule encodes a TNHx transporter polypeptide, a PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell;
- 10 (b) a nucleic acid molecule degenerate with respect to (a), wherein the nucleic molecule encodes a TNHx transporter polypeptide, a PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.

The hybridization conditions preferably comprise moderate (also called intermediate) or high stringency conditions selected from the conditions in Table 4.

- 15 The invention also includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a THX transporter polypeptide or a PNHX transporter polypeptide, or a fragment of a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerances in a cell, comprising a nucleic acid molecule selected from the group consisting of:

- 20 (a) the nucleic acid molecule of the coding strand shown in [SEQ ID NO:1], [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:17], [SEQ ID NO:19] or a complement thereof;
- (b) a nucleic acid molecule encoding the same amino acid sequence as a nucleotide sequence of (a); and
- 25 (c) a nucleic acid molecule having at least 17% identity with the nucleotide sequence of (a) and which encodes a THX transporter polypeptide or the PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity.

- 30 The THX transporter polypeptide or the PNHX transporter polypeptide preferably comprises an AtNHX transporter polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell. The nucleic acid molecule may comprise all or part of a nucleotide sequence in [SEQ ID NO:1], [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:17] or [SEQ ID NO:19] (or the coding region thereof).

The invention also includes an AtNHX nucleic acid molecule isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*, or a fragment thereof encoding a transporter polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.

Another aspect of the invention relates to a recombinant nucleic acid molecule  
5 comprising a nucleic acid molecule and a constitutive promoter sequence or an inducible promoter sequence, operatively linked so that the promoter enhances transcription of the nucleic acid molecule in a host cell.

The nucleic acid molecule preferably comprises genomic DNA, cDNA or RNA. In another aspect, the nucleic acid molecule is chemically synthesized. The nucleic acid  
10 molecule is preferably isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

The nucleic acid molecule preferably encodes a TNHx transporter polypeptide or PNHx transporter polypeptide that is capable of extruding monovalent cations out of the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with increased salt tolerance, wherein the monovalent cations are selected from at least one of the group consisting of sodium, lithium and  
15 potassium. The cell preferably comprises a plant cell. The monovalent cations are preferably extruded into a vacuole or into the extracellular space.

The invention also includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleic acid molecule selected from the group consisting of 8 to 10 nucleotides of the nucleic acid molecules described above, 11 to 25 nucleotides of the nucleic acid  
20 molecules described above, and 26 to 50 nucleotides of the nucleic acid molecules described above.

The invention also includes an isolated oligonucleotide comprising at least about 10 nucleotides from a sequence selected from the group consisting of 5'-GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCG-3' [SEQ ID NO:11], 5'-  
25 CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3' [SEQ ID NO:12], 5'-CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3' [SEQ ID NO:13], 5'-GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCG-3' [SEQ ID NO:14], 5'-CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3' [SEQ ID NO:15], 5'-CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3' [SEQ ID NO:16] or another  
30 oligonucleotide described in this application.

Another aspect of the invention relates to a vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The vector preferably comprises a promoter selected from the group consisting of a super promoter, a 35S promoter of cauliflower mosaic virus, a drought-inducible promoter, an ABA-inducible promoter, a heat shock-inducible

promoter, a salt-inducible promoter, a copper-inducible promoter, a steroid-inducible promoter and a tissue-specific promoter.

The invention also includes a host cell comprising a recombinant nucleic acid molecule of the invention, or progeny of the host cell.

5       The host cell is preferably selected from the group consisting of a fungal cell, a yeast cell, a bacterial cell, a microorganism cell and a plant cell. The plant, a plant part, a seed, a plant cell or progeny thereof preferably comprises the recombinant nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The plant part preferably comprises all or part of a leaf, a flower, a stem, a root or a tuber. The plant, plant part, seed or plant cell is preferably  
10 of a species selected from the group consisting of potato, tomato, brassica, cotton, sunflower, strawberries, spinach, lettuce, rice, soybean, corn, wheat, rye, barley, atriplex, sorghum, alfalfa, salicornia and the plant species or types in Table 5.

The plant, plant part, seed or plant cell preferably comprises a dicot plant or a monocot plant.

15       The invention also relates to a method for producing a recombinant host cell capable of expressing the nucleic acid molecule of the invention, the method comprising introducing into the host cell a vector of the invention. The invention also includes a method of producing a genetically transformed plant which expresses TNHx or PNHX transporter polypeptide, comprising regenerating a genetically transformed plant from a  
20 plant cell, seed or plant part of the invention. In one method, the genome of the host cell also includes a functional TNHx or PNHX gene. In another method, the genome of the host cell does not include a functional TNHx or PNHX gene. The invention also includes a transgenic plant produced according to a method of the invention.

25       Another aspect of the invention relates to a method for expressing a TNHx or PNHX transporter polypeptide in the host cell of the invention, a the plant, plant part, seed or plant cell of the invention, the method comprising culturing the host cell under conditions suitable for gene expression. A method for producing a transgenic plant that expresses elevated levels of PNHX transporter polypeptide relative to a non-transgenic plant, comprising transforming a plant with the vector of the invention. The invention  
30 also relates to an isolated polypeptide encoded by and/or produced from a nucleic acid molecule of the invention, or the vector of the invention.

The invention also relates to an isolated PNHX transporter polypeptide or a fragment thereof having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell. The polypeptide of the invention preferably comprises an AtNHX



transporter polypeptide. The polypeptide of the invention preferably comprises all or part of an amino acid sequence in [SEQ ID NOS: 2, 4, 6, 8, 18, or 20] (figure 1). The invention also includes a polypeptide fragment of the AtNHX transporter polypeptide of the invention, or a peptide mimetic of the AtNHX transporter polypeptide, having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell. The polypeptide fragment of the invention, preferably consists of at least 20 amino acids, which fragment has Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and is capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell. The fragment or peptide mimetic of the invention is preferably capable of being bound by an antibody to a polypeptide of the invention. In one embodiment, the polypeptide of the invention is recombinantly produced.

The invention also includes an isolated and purified transporter polypeptide comprising the amino acid sequence of a TNHx transporter polypeptide or a PNHx transporter polypeptide, wherein the transporter polypeptide is encoded by a nucleic acid molecule that hybridizes under moderate or stringent conditions to a nucleic acid molecule in [SEQ ID NOS: 1, 3, 5, 7, 17, or 19] (figure 1), a degenerate form thereof or a complement. The invention also includes a polypeptide comprising a sequence having greater than 28% sequence identity to a polypeptide of the invention (preferably a polypeptide in figure 1, such as [SEQ ID NOS: 2, 4, 6, 8, 18, or 20]).

The polypeptide of the invention, preferably comprises a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter polypeptide. The polypeptide is preferably isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

The invention also includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding polypeptide of the invention (preferably a polypeptide in figure 1: [SEQ ID NOS: 2, 4, 6, 8, 18, or 20]).

Another aspect of the invention relates to an antibody directed against a polypeptide of the invention. The antibody of the invention, preferably comprises a monoclonal antibody or a polyclonal antibody.

The invention also relates to an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a TNHx transporter polypeptide or a PNHx transporter polypeptide, or a fragment of a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell, comprising a nucleic acid molecule selected from the group consisting of:

- (a) a nucleic acid molecule that hybridizes to all or part of a nucleic molecule in [SEQ ID NO:5], [SEQ ID NO:7], [SEQ ID NO:9] or to a nucleic acid molecule comprising about nucleotides 1-1487 of [SEQ ID NO:9], or a complement thereof under moderate or high stringency hybridization

conditions, wherein the nucleic acid molecule encodes a TNHx transporter polypeptide, a PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell;

- 5 (b) a nucleic acid molecule degenerate with respect to (a), wherein the nucleic molecule encodes a TNHx polypeptide, a PNHX polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
- 10 (c) the nucleic acid molecule of the coding strand shown in [SEQ ID NO:5], [SEQ ID NO:7], [SEQ ID NO:9], nucleotides 1-1487 of [SEQ ID NO:9], or an isolated nucleic acid molecule including about 1614 nucleic acids including [SEQ ID NO:5], [SEQ ID NO:7], nucleotides 1 to 1487 of the nucleic acid molecule in [SEQ ID NO:9] or the complement thereof;
- 15 (d) a nucleic acid molecule encoding the same amino acid sequence as a nucleotide sequence of (c); and
- (e) a nucleic acid molecule having at least 17% sequence identity with the nucleotide sequence of (c) and which encodes a TNHx transporter polypeptide, a PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
- 20

The invention also includes a polypeptide produced from a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The invention includes a polypeptide comprising (a) the amino acid sequence in [SEQ ID NO:6], [SEQ ID NO:8], [SEQ ID NO:10]; (b) amino acids 1 to 496 of [SEQ ID NO:10]; and (c) a sequence having greater than 28% homology to the polypeptide in (a) or (b). The invention includes a polypeptide comprising a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter polypeptide capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell. The invention also includes a DNA molecule encoding the polypeptides of the invention.

The invention relates to a method of producing a genetically transformed plant which expresses or overexpresses a TNHx transporter polypeptide, a PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell and wherein the plant has increased salt tolerance, comprising:

- a) cloning or synthesizing a TNHx nucleic acid molecule, a PNHX nucleic acid molecule or a nucleic acid molecule which codes for a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup>

transporter polypeptide, wherein the polypeptide is capable of providing salt tolerance to a plant;

- b) inserting the nucleic acid molecule in a vector so that the nucleic acid molecule is operably linked to a promoter;
- 5 c) inserting the vector into a plant cell or plant seed;
- d) regenerating the plant from the plant cell or plant seed, wherein salt tolerance in the plant is increased compared to a wild type plant.

The invention includes a transgenic plant produced according to a method of the invention.

- 10 The nucleic acid molecules have several uses which will be discussed in more detail below. The nucleic acid molecules and the polypeptides are used in a method for protecting a plant from the adverse affects of a saline environment by incorporating a nucleic acid molecule for salt tolerance and/or the polypeptide of the invention into a plant. The nucleic acid molecules of the invention are also useful for the identification of
- 15 homologous nucleic acid molecules from plant species, preferably salt tolerant species and genetically engineering salt tolerant plants of agricultural and commercial interest.

- The invention relates to isolated nucleic acid molecules encoding a polypeptide for extrusion of sodium ions from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance. The nucleic acid molecules preferably comprise the nucleotide sequence in
- 20 figure 1(a) or (b). The nucleic acid molecules may be DNA or RNA. The nucleic acid molecules may be used to transform a cell selected from the group consisting of a plant cell, a yeast cell and a bacterial cell. The sodium ions are extruded into a vacuole or out of the cell. The nucleic acid molecules encode a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger polypeptide.

- In a preferred embodiment, the nucleic acid molecules are isolated from
- 25 *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

The invention includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule, comprising the DNA sequence in figure 1(a), (b), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d) or (e). The invention also relates to an isolated nucleic acid molecule, comprising a sequence having greater than 17% homology to the sequences of the invention described in the preceding paragraphs.

- 30 In an alternate embodiment, the nucleic acid molecule consists of a sequence selected from the group consisting of 8 to 10 nucleotides of the nucleic acid molecules of the invention, 11 to 25 nucleotides of the nucleic acid molecule and 26 to 50

nucleotides of the nucleic acid molecules. These nucleic acid molecules hybridize to nucleic acid molecules described in the preceding paragraphs.

The nucleic acid molecule of the invention may have a sense or an antisense sequence.

- 5 In another embodiment, the invention is an isolated oligonucleotide consisting of a sequence selected from the group consisting of 5'-GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCG-3 [SEQ ID NO:11], 5'-CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3' [SEQ ID NO:12], 5'-CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3' [SEQ ID NO:13], an oligonucleotide  
10 with an antisense sequence of 5'-GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCG-3 [SEQ ID NO:14], an oligonucleotide with an antisense sequence of 5'-CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3' [SEQ ID NO:15] and an oligonucleotide with an antisense sequence of 5'-CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3' [SEQ ID NO:16]. The invention includes an isolated oligonucleotide consisting of 5 to 15  
15 nucleotides of these oligonucleotides. The invention includes an isolated oligonucleotide consisting of a sequence homologous to the oligonucleotide of claim 15 or claim 16.

- In an alternate embodiment, the invention is an expression vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The expression vector preferably consists of a  
20 promoter selected from the group consisting of a super promoter, a 35S promoter of cauliflower mosaic virus, a drought-inducible promoter, an ABA-inducible promoter, a heat shock-inducible promoter, a salt-inducible promoter, a copper-inducible promoter, a steroid-inducible promoter and a tissue-specific promoter.

- The invention is a polypeptide produced from the nucleic acid molecules of the  
25 invention. The invention is also a polypeptide produced from the expression vector. The polypeptide is used for extrusion of sodium ions from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance.

- In a preferred embodiment, the polypeptide has the amino acid sequence in  
figure 1(a)-(e). The polypeptides may be homologous to the polypeptide in figure 1(a)-  
30 (e). In an alternate embodiment, the polypeptides comprise a sequence having greater than 28% homology to the polypeptide in figure 1(a)-(e). The polypeptides are Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger polypeptides.

The polypeptides are preferably isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

The invention includes peptides consisting of at least 5 amino acids of the polypeptides described in the preceding paragraphs. In another embodiment, the peptides consist of 41 to 75 amino acids of the polypeptides described in the preceding paragraphs.

The invention also includes isolated nucleic acid molecules encoding the polypeptides of the invention. The isolated nucleic acid molecule preferably encodes the polypeptide of figure 1(a)-(e).

The polypeptides of the invention that extrude sodium ions from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance, preferably consist of an amiloride binding domain. The amiloride binding domain is between amino acids 82 to 90 in both AtNHX1 and AtNHX2, in figure 1(a)-(e) and between amino acids 58 to 66 in both AtNHX3 and AtNHX4 in figures (d) and (e).

The invention also includes a monoclonal antibody or polyclonal antibody directed against a polypeptide of the invention.

Another embodiment of the invention includes a transformed microorganism comprising an isolated nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The invention also includes a transformed microorganism including an expression vector.

The invention includes a plant cell transformed with a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The invention also includes a yeast cell transformed with the nucleic acid molecule of the invention. In another embodiment, the invention is a plant, plant part or seed, generated from a plant cell transformed with a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The invention also relates to a plant, plant part, seed or plant cell transfected with a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The plant, plant part, seed or plant cell is preferably selected from a species selected from the group consisting of potato, tomato, brassica, cotton, sunflower, strawberries, spinach, lettuce, rice, soybean, corn, wheat, rye, barley, atriplex, sorghum, alfalfa and salicornia and other plants in Table 5.

The invention also includes a method for producing a polypeptide of the invention by culturing a plant, plant part, seed or plant cell of the invention and recovering the expressed polypeptide from the culture.

The invention includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a polypeptide capable of extruding monovalent cations from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with increased salt tolerance. The nucleic acid molecule preferably includes the

nucleotide sequence in figure 1(a)-(e). The nucleic acid molecule is preferably DNA or RNA. The cell is preferably a plant cell, a yeast cell or a bacterial cell. The monovalent cations are preferably sodium, lithium or potassium. The monovalent cations are preferably extruded into a vacuole or out of the cell. The nucleic acid molecules

5 preferably encode a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger polypeptide. The nucleic acid molecule is preferably isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

The invention also includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule, including a sequence having greater than 17% homology to a sequence referred to in the preceding paragraph.

10 The invention also includes a nucleic acid molecule of 8 to 10 nucleotides, 11 to 25 or 26 to 50 nucleotides of a nucleic acid molecule of the invention.

The invention also includes a nucleic acid molecule which nucleic acid molecule hybridizes a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The nucleic acid molecule comprises a sense or an antisense sequence.

15 The invention also includes an isolated oligonucleotide including a sequence selected from the group consisting of 5'-GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCG-3' [SEQ ID NO:11], 5'-CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3' [SEQ ID NO:12], 5'-CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3' [SEQ ID NO:13], 5'-GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCG-3' [SEQ ID NO:14], 5'-

20 CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3' [SEQ ID NO:15] and 5'-CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3' [SEQ ID NO:16] or 5 to 15 nucleotides of one of these oligonucleotides. The invention also includes an isolated oligonucleotide having a sequence homologous to one of these oligonucleotides.

The invention also includes an expression vector including a nucleic acid

25 molecule of the invention. The expression vector preferably comprises a promoter selected from the group consisting of a super promoter, a 35S promoter of cauliflower mosaic virus, a drought-inducible promoter, an ABA-inducible promoter, a heat shock-inducible promoter, a salt-inducible promoter, a copper-inducible promoter, a steroid-inducible promoter and a tissue-specific promoter.

30 The invention also includes a polypeptide produced from a nucleic acid molecule or expression vector of the invention. The invention also includes a polypeptide for extrusion of monovalent cations ions from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance. The invention also includes a polypeptide including the amino acid sequence in figure 1(a)-(e) or a polypeptide homologous to one of these sequences.

The invention also includes a polypeptide including a sequence having greater than 28% homology to one of these polypeptides. The polypeptide is preferably a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger polypeptide isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. The invention also includes a peptide including at least 5 amino acids or 41 to 75 amino acids of the polypeptide of the invention. The invention also includes nucleic acid molecules these polypeptides.

The invention includes a polypeptide for extrusion of monovalent cations ions from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance, including, but not necessarily having, an amiloride binding domain.

Another aspect of the invention relates to a monoclonal or polyclonal antibody directed against a polypeptide of the invention.

Another variation includes a transformed microorganism including an isolated nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The transformed microorganism preferably includes an expression vector of the invention.

A plant cell, yeast cell transformed or transfected with a nucleic acid molecule or a plant, plant part or seed, generated from the plant cell. The plant, plant part, seed or plant cell is preferably from a species selected from the group consisting of potato, tomato, brassica, cotton, sunflower, strawberries, spinach, lettuce, rice, soybean, corn, wheat, rye, barley, atriplex, sorghum, alfalfa, salicornia and other plants in Table 5. The invention also includes a method for producing a peptide, by culturing the plant, plant part, seed or plant cell and recovering the expressed peptide from the culture.

The invention includes a nucleic acid molecule that encodes all or part of a polypeptide capable of extruding monovalent cations from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance, wherein the sequence hybridizes to the nucleic acid molecule of all or part of [SEQ ID NO:1] or [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:17], [SEQ ID NO:19], figure 5(b) or a nucleic acid molecule including nucleotides 1-1487 of figure 5(b) under low, medium and high stringency conditions. The high stringency conditions preferably comprise a wash stringency of selected from the group of hybridization and wash stringencies in Table 4.

The invention includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a polypeptide capable of extruding monovalent cations from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance, including the nucleic acid molecule in figure 5(b). The invention also includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a polypeptide capable of extruding monovalent cations from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance, including nucleotides 1 to 1487 of the nucleic acid molecule in figure 5(b).

Another aspect of the invention relates to an isolated nucleic acid molecule including about 1640 (or preferably about 1600 or 1700) nucleic acids encoding a polypeptide capable of extruding monovalent cations from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance, the nucleic acid molecule including nucleotides 1 to 1487 (or  
5 preferably about nucleotides 1 to 1470, 1480, 1490 or 1500) of the nucleic acid molecule in figure 5(b). The molecule is preferably DNA or RNA. The cell is preferably selected from the group consisting of a plant cell, a yeast cell and a bacterial cell. The molecule preferably encodes a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger polypeptide. The nucleic acid molecule is preferably isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

10 The invention also includes the nucleic acid molecule in figure 5(b) or a nucleic acid molecule having greater than 17% homology to the sequence in 5(b). The invention includes polypeptides produced from this one of these nucleic acid molecules. The invention also relates to a polypeptide including the amino acid sequence in figure 5(b) or amino acids 1 to 496 of figure 5(b). (note: polypeptide including 1 to 496 is  
15 preferably about 530, 540 or 550 amino acids, most preferably about 538 amino acids) or a homologous polypeptide, preferably having greater than 28% homology. The polypeptide is preferably a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger polypeptide, isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. The invention also includes a DNA molecule encoding one of these polypeptides.

20 The invention includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a polypeptide capable of extruding monovalent cations from the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with salt tolerance, including at least one of the nucleic acid molecules in figure 1(c). The molecule is preferably DNA or RNA. The cell is preferably selected from the group consisting of a plant cell, a yeast cell and a bacterial cell and encodes a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$   
25 exchanger polypeptide isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

The invention includes an isolated nucleic acid molecule, including the nucleic acid molecule in figure 1(c)(i) or 1(c)(ii) or a polypeptide produced from a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The invention also includes a polypeptide including the amino acid sequence in figure 1(c)(i) or 1(c)(ii) or homologous to this polypeptide,  
30 preferably having greater than 28% homology. The polypeptide is preferably a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger polypeptide, isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. The invention includes a DNA molecule encoding one of these polypeptides.

It will be clear to one skilled in the art that the sequences in figures 1(c) and 5 are useful in isolating other salt tolerant nucleic acid molecules (for example probes may  
35 be made from the sequences in figures 1(c) and 5), preparing transgenic plants and



performing many of the other methods of the invention that are described with respect to sequences in figures 1(a), (b), (d) and (e). Variants and modifications of figure 1(c) and figure 5 sequences are also included within the invention as are methods using varied or modified sequences (the same preferred percentages of identity and sequence described with respect to

5 figures 1(a), (b), (d) and (e) also apply to figures 1(c) and 5). Nucleic acid molecules including a portion of the nucleic acid molecule in figure 5 preferably include about nucleotides 1-1487 (or a partial sequence thereof, preferably starting from the coding region, which will be apparent to a skilled person, at about nucleotide 286). The nucleotide sequence including all or part of

10 sequence in figure 1(c) or figure (5) will be preferably about 1683 or about 1614 nucleotides in length, respectively, (or 1683 or 1614 nucleotides minus part or all of the 5' or 3' untranslated region nucleotides). The nucleic acid molecules are most preferably 1600 to 1620 or 1670 to 1690 nucleotides in length. Polypeptides including a portion of the nucleic acid molecule in

figure 5 preferably include about amino acids 1 to 496 (or a partial sequence thereof) in figure 5. The sequences encoding all or part of the polypeptide in figure 5 or encoding a polypeptide

15 corresponding to either of the nucleic acid molecule sequences in figure 1(c) are preferably about 538 amino acids (preferably about 60 kda) and about 318 amino acids in length, respectively. Preferred polypeptides are about 530-550 amino acids in length or 310-330 amino acids. Polypeptides including a portion of the nucleic acid molecule in figure 1(c) preferably

include part or all of either of the sequences in 1(c) (nucleic acid molecules preferably include all

20 or part of the corresponding nucleic acid molecule sequences).

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the invention are described in relation to the drawings in which:

**Figure 1.** (a) Shows the nucleic acid molecule that is [SEQ ID NO:1] and the polypeptide that is [SEQ ID NO:2].

25 In a preferred embodiment, the figure shows isolated *AtNHX1* cDNA encoding a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger from *Arabidopsis thaliana* showing cDNA sequence and the corresponding amino acid sequence for AtNHX1. Twelve transmembrane domains are present, a conserved amiloride-binding domain is present, and a relatively hydrophilic C-terminal region is also present. The predicted open reading frame begins at nucleotide 286. The amino acids are

30 centred below the corresponding codon and are numbered on the left;

(b) Shows the nucleic acid molecule that is [SEQ ID NO:3] and the polypeptide that is [SEQ ID NO:4].

In a preferred embodiment, the figure shows isolated *AtNHX2* cDNA encoding a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger from *Arabidopsis thaliana* showing cDNA sequence and the

corresponding predicted amino acid sequence for AtNHX2. The predicted open reading frame begins at nucleotide 61. The amino acids are centred below the corresponding codon and are numbered on the left;

- (c) (i) Shows the nucleic acid molecule that is [SEQ ID NO:5] and the polypeptide that is [SEQ ID NO:6]. (ii) Shows the nucleic acid molecule that is [SEQ ID NO:7] and the polypeptide that is [SEQ ID NO:8].

In a preferred embodiment, the figure shows AtNHX3 partial cDNA sequences. The amino acids are centred below the corresponding codon and are numbered on the left (i) 5' sequence of the partial AtNHX3 cDNA and amino acid sequence; (ii) In a preferred embodiment, the figure shows 3' sequence of the partial AtNHX3 cDNA and amino sequence;

- (d) Shows the nucleic acid molecule that is [SEQ ID NO:17] and the polypeptide that is [SEQ ID NO:18].

In a preferred embodiment, the figure shows isolated AtNHX3 cDNA encoding a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger from *Arabidopsis thaliana* showing cDNA sequence and the corresponding predicted amino acid sequence for AtNHX3. The predicted open reading frame begins at nucleotide 67. The amino acids are centred below the corresponding codon and are numbered on the left. (e) Isolated AtNHX4 cDNA encoding a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger from *Arabidopsis thaliana* showing cDNA sequence [SEQ ID NO:19] and the corresponding predicted amino acid sequence [SEQ ID NO:20] for AtNHX4. The predicted open reading frame begins at nucleotide 55. The amino acids are centred below the corresponding codon and are numbered on the left.

- (e) Shows the nucleic acid molecule that is [SEQ ID NO:19] and the polypeptide that is [SEQ ID NO:20].

In a preferred embodiment, the figure shows isolated AtNHX4 cDNA encoding a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

**Figure 2.** (a) Alignment of the predicted amino acid sequences of Arabidopsis AtNHX1, from *Arabidopsis thaliana* with other Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchangers from other organisms. Sequences were aligned using the Clustal W program [19] using default parameters (fixed gap penalty=10, floating gap penalty=10, protein weight matrix BLOSUM62). Sequences and GenBank accession numbers are: ScNHX1, late endosomal Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger *S. cerevisiae* (GenBank accession #927695); CeNHE1, *C. elegans* (GenBank accession # 3877723; HsNHE6, Homo sapiens mitochondrial Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger (GenBank accession # 2944237); (b) Alignment of the predicted amino acid

- sequences of *Arabidopsis* AtNHX1, AtNHX2 and AtNHX3 cDNAs from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Sequences were aligned using the Clustal W program [19] using default parameters (fixed gap penalty=10, floating gap penalty=10, protein weight matrix BLOSUM62). (c) Alignment of the predicted amino acid sequences of *Arabidopsis* AtNHX3 and AtNHX4 cDNAs from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Sequences were aligned using the Clustal W program [19] using default parameters (fixed gap penalty=10, floating gap penalty=10, protein weight matrix BLOSUM62); (b) Alignment of the predicted amino acid sequences of AtNHX1, AtNHX2 and AtNHX3 cDNAs from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Sequences were aligned using the Clustal W program using default parameters (fixed gap penalty=10, floating gap penalty=10, protein weight matrix BLOSUM62); (c) Alignment of the predicted amino acid sequences of AtNHX3 and AtNHX4 cDNAs from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Sequences were aligned using the Clustal W program using default parameters (fixed gap penalty=10, floating gap penalty=10, protein weight matrix BLOSUM62).
- 15 **Figure 3.** A Southern blot of *Arabidopsis* genomic DNA. Genomic DNA (10 µg per lane) was digested with various restriction enzymes, separated on a 1.0% agarose gel, transferred onto a GeneScreen Plus membrane (Amersham), and hybridized to a radiolabelled AtNHX1 cDNA as described in Materials and Methods. Restriction enzymes used were; C, ClaI; E, EcoRI; X, XbaI; H, HindIII.
- 20 **Figure 4.** RNA blot of AtNHX1 expression in different tissues. Total RNA (40 µg) was separated on a 1.0% agarose gel, transferred to a GeneScreen Plus membrane (Amersham) and hybridized to a radiolabelled AtNHX1 cDNA probe as described in Materials and Methods. Tissues in each lane were as follows: 1, mature leaf; 2, flower (including sepals); 3, inflorescence stem;
- 25 4, seedling shoot; 5, seedling root.

**Figure 5.** (a) and (b) show the nucleic acid molecule that is [SEQ ID NO:9] and the polypeptide that is [SEQ ID NO:10].

In a preferred embodiment, (a) and (b) show modified *Arabidopsis* sodium/proton antiporter cDNA and polypeptide sequence.

- 30 **Figure 6.** RNA blot comparing transcript levels in *Arabidopsis thaliana* leaf tissue from wild type and different transgenic lines overexpressing AtNHX1. RNA was extracted from 4 week-old plants. Total RNA (30 µg per lane) was separated on a 1.0 % agarose gel, transferred to a GeneScreen Plus membrane (Amersham) and hybridized to a radiolabelled AtNHX1 cDNA probe as described in Materials and Methods. An

endogenous 2.1 kb transcript was detected in the transgenic lines as well as in wild type. An overexpressed 1.8 kb transcript was only seen in the transgenic lines. The 1.8 kb transcript corresponds to the open reading frame coding for AtNHX1, lacking the 5'- and 3'-untranslated regions present in the original cDNA (2.1 kb). Ribosomal RNA (rRNA) was used to confirm equal loading of the gels, as seen by methylene-blue staining of the blot.

wt: wild-type; X1-2', X1-3' and X1-4': independent transgenic lines.

**Figure 7.** Twenty 3-week old kanamycin-resistant *Arabidopsis thaliana* plants for each of the 3 independent transgenic lines (X1.2', X1.3' and X1.4') transformed with AtNHX1, as well as 20 wild-type plants of the same age were used for assessment of salt tolerance. Plants were watered with 25 ml of 1/8 strength MS salts (control solution) supplemented with different concentrations of NaCl. The following schedule was used for a total of 16 days, at which point pictures of representative plants were taken: a) wild-type: A=0mM NaCl, B=50mM NaCl, C=100mM NaCl, D=150mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl; b) X1.2' transgenic line: A=0mM NaCl, B=50mM NaCl, C=100mM NaCl, D=150mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl; c) X1.3' transgenic line; d) X1.4' transgenic line: A=0mM NaCl, B=50mM NaCl, C=100mM NaCl, D=150mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl; e) wild type: A=0mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl vs. transgenic strain 2': A=0mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl; f) wild type: A=0mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl vs. transgenic strain 4': A=0mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl; g) wild type: A=0mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl vs. transgenic strain 2': A=0mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl and transgenic strain 4': A=0mM NaCl, E=200mM NaCl.

#### Treatments:

- A) watered with a control solution (1/8 MS strength solution, 0mM NaCl) eight times (once every two days)
- B) watered with a control solution supplemented with 50mM NaCl eight times (once every two days)
- C) watered twice (once every two days) with a control solution supplemented with 50mM NaCl, then with a control solution supplemented with 100mM NaCl six times (once every two days).
- D) watered twice (once every two days) with a control solution supplemented with 50mM NaCl, then with a control solution supplemented with 100mM NaCl twice (once every two days) followed by a control solution supplemented with 150mM NaCl four times (once every two days).

E) watered twice (once every two days) with a control solution supplemented with 50mM NaCl, then with a control solution supplemented with 100mM NaCl twice (once every two days) followed by a control solution supplemented with 150mM NaCl twice (once every two days) and a control solution supplemented with 200 mM NaCl twice (once every two days).

**Figure 8.** (a) shows [SEQ ID NO:21] (b) shows [SEQ ID NO:22] (c) shows [SEQ ID NO:23] (d) shows [SEQ ID NO:24] (e) shows [SEQ ID NO:25] (f) shows [SEQ ID NO:26] (g) shows [SEQ ID NO:27] (h) shows [SEQ ID NO:28].

In preferred embodiments, (a)-(h) show sequences from Table 2: (a) GenBank Accession No. 3850064 569 a.a.; (b) GenBank Accession No. 927695 633 a.a.; (c) GenBank Accession No. C91832 378 bp mRNA EST; (d) GenBank Accession No. C91861 268 bp mRNA EST; (e) GenBank Accession No. AU032544 380 bp mRNA EST; (f) GenBank Accession No. AA660573 596 bp mRNA EST; (g) GenBank Accession No. L44032 522 bp mRNA STS; (h) GenBank Accession No. T75860 (EST) 330 bp mRNA EST.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

### Salt Tolerance Nucleic Acid Molecules and Polypeptides

The invention relates to nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides which increase salt tolerance in cells and plants. PNHX polypeptides are plant Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter polypeptides that are capable of increasing and enhancing salt tolerance in a cell, preferably a plant cell. These transporters (also referred to as exchangers, antiports or antiporters) extrude monovalent cations (preferably potassium ions or lithium ions, most preferably sodium ions) out of the cytosol. The cations are preferably extruded into the vacuoles or extracellular space. The affinity for particular ions varies between transporters. The listed preferences refer to the cations that are most likely to be abundant in the cytosol and therefore most likely to be extruded. It is not necessarily a reflection of transporter affinity for particular cations. The PNHX nucleic acid molecules which encode PNHX polypeptides are particularly useful in producing transgenic plants which have increased salt tolerance compared to a wild type plant.

It will also be apparent that there are polypeptide and nucleic acid molecules from other organisms, such as yeast, microorganisms, fish, birds or mammals, that are similar to PNHX polypeptides and nucleic acid molecules. The entire group of Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter polypeptides and nucleic acid molecules that are capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell (including PNHX and AtNHX polypeptides and nucleic acid

molecules) are collectively referred to as ("TNHX polypeptides" and "TNHX nucleic acid molecules"). TNHX polypeptides are  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporters that are capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell, preferably a plant cell, because they extrude monovalent cations (preferably potassium ions or lithium ions, most preferably sodium ions) out of the

5 cytosol.

The role of TNHX and PNHX nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides in maintaining salt tolerance was not shown before this invention. The ability of these compounds to increase salt tolerance of transgenic host cells (particularly plant cells) and transgenic plants compared to wild type cells and plants was unknown.

10 PNHX and TNHX polypeptides need not necessarily have the primary function of providing salt tolerance. All nucleotides and polypeptides which are suitable for use in the methods of the invention, such as the preparation of transgenic host cells or transgenic plants, are included within the scope of the invention. Genomic clones or cDNA clones are preferred for preparation of transgenic cells and plants.

15 In a preferred embodiment, the invention relates to cDNAs encoding  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchangers from *Arabidopsis thaliana*. The cDNA sequences and the corresponding amino acid sequences for AtNHX1, AtNHX2, AtNHX3 and AtNHX4 are presented in Figure 1. AtNHX1 and AtNHX2 are homologs that are physically located at different places in the genome. The invention also includes splice variants of the nucleic acid

20 molecules as well as polypeptides produced from the molecules. For example, AtNHX3 and AtNHX4 are homologs of AtNHX1 and AtNHX2. AtNHX3 and AtNHX4 are identical for a long sequence beginning at the N-terminus. This indicates that the difference in sequence at the C-terminus is due to alternative splicing of a nucleic acid molecule (also known as splicing variants). This allows a single nucleic acid molecule to produce

25 varying polypeptides.

#### **Characterization of Salt Tolerance Nucleic Acid Molecules and Polypeptides**

The longest open reading frame of 1614 base pairs in AtNHX1 encodes a polypeptide of 538 amino acids with a predicted molecular weight ("MW") of about 60 Kda. A comparison of this full length cDNA with the *Arabidopsis* genome sequence (A-

30 TM021B04.4) revealed the presence of 13 introns and 14 exons. This polypeptide encoded by the open reading frame was about 19% larger than the sequence predicted by the *Arabidopsis* genomic sequence (A\_TM021B04.4). This sequence encodes the full length exchanger given that the cDNA region immediately upstream of the start codon contains predicted stop codons in all three reading frames. In addition, a

transcript of approximately 2 kb, which corresponds roughly in size to the predicted mRNA for AtNHX1, was observed on RNA blots. Based on the amino acid sequence of AtNHX1, 12 transmembrane domains are predicted, a conserved amiloride-binding domain is present, and a relatively hydrophilic C-terminal region is also predicted.

- 5 AtNHX1 shows some similarity at the amino acid level to Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchangers isolated from a variety of organisms ranging from yeast (about 27% identity) to humans (about 20%). A second salt tolerance cDNA and polypeptide, AtNHX2, was obtained from *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Figure 1(b)). We characterized a third salt tolerance nucleic acid molecule, AtNHX3, by obtaining 5' and 3' cDNA and N-terminal and C-terminal
- 10 sequences from *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Figure 1(c)). In one variation, the invention includes DNA sequences (and the corresponding polypeptide) including at least one of the sequences shown in figure 1(c) in a nucleic acid molecule of preferably about: less than 1000 base pairs, less than 1250 base pairs, less than 1500 base pairs, less than 1750 base pairs, less than 2000 base pairs, less than 2250 base pairs, less than 2500
- 15 base pairs, less than 2750 base pairs or less than 3000 base pairs. We also identified the full AtNHX3 sequence (Figure 1(d)). A fourth sequence, AtNHX4, was also identified (figure 1(e)).

The coding regions of the nucleic acid molecules are as follows:

Table 1

Nucleic Acid Molecule	Start Nucleotide	End Nucleotide
AtNHX1	286	1902
AtNHX2	61	1707
AtNHX3	67	1024
AtNHX4	55	813

20

It will be apparent that these may be varied, for example, by shortening the 5' untranslated region or shortening the nucleic acid molecule so that the end nucleotide is in a different position.

- 25 The discussion of the nucleic acid molecules, sequence identity, hybridization and other aspects of nucleic acid molecules included within the scope of the invention is intended to be applicable to either the entire nucleic acid molecules in figures 1(a), (b), (d) and (e) and the coding regions of these molecules, shown in Table 1. One may use the entire molecule in figure 1 or only the coding region. Other possible modifications to the sequence will also be apparent.

Southern Blot Analysis (figure 3) suggests that AtNHX1 is likely present as a single copy gene in *Arabidopsis*. A Northern blot (figure 4) showed that AtNHX polypeptide (particularly AtNHX1) was expressed in all tissues examined (root, shoot (shoot includes leaves and stems), flower, inflorescence stem).

5    **Function of Salt Tolerance Nucleic Acid Molecules**

The polypeptides of the invention allow the extrusion of monovalent cations (preferably potassium ions or lithium ions, most preferably sodium ions) from the cytosol, which in this application preferably refers to the transport and accumulation of sodium ions into the vacuoles or into the extracellular space (outside of the cell), thus  
10    providing the most important trait for salt tolerance in plants. Antiport polypeptides from organisms other than plants have shown different specificity for monovalent ions (e.g. D.G. Warnock, A.S. Pollock, "Sodium Proton Exchange in Epithelial Cells", pages 77-90, in S. Grinstein ed. Sodium Proton Exchange, (1987, CRC Press, USA).) TNHX and PNHX transporters will also show different specificity between transporters. The nucleic  
15    acid molecules of the invention allow the engineering of salt tolerant plants by transformation of crops with this nucleic acid molecule under the control of constitutively active promoters or under the control of conditionally-inducible promoters. The resulting expression or overexpression of these nucleic acid molecules confers increased salt tolerance in plants grown in soil, solid, semi-solid medium or hydroponically.

20    **The PNHX Nucleic Acid Molecule and Polypeptide is Conserved in Plants**

**Sequence Identity**

This is the first isolation of a nucleic acid molecule encoding a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger from plant species. It is widely known amongst those skilled in the art that *Arabidopsis thaliana* is a model plant for many plant species. Nucleic acid sequences having  
25    sequence identity to the AtNHX sequences are found in other plants, in particular halophytes such as *Beta Vulgaris* and *Atriplex* (see Examples 2 and 7). Sequences from *Arabidopsis thaliana* and other plants are collectively referred to as "PNHX" nucleic acid sequences and polypeptides. We isolate PNHX nucleic acid molecules from plants having nucleic acid molecules that are similar to those in *Arabidopsis thaliana*, such as  
30    beet, tomato, rice, cucumber, radish and other plants as in Table 5 and using techniques described in this application. The invention includes methods of isolating these nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides as well as methods of using these nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides according to the methods described in this application, for example those used with respect to AtNHX.



Table 2 below shows several sequences with sequence identity and sequence similarity to the AtNHX polypeptides. Where polypeptides are shown, a suitable corresponding DNA encoding the polypeptide will be apparent. These sequences code for polypeptides similar to portions of AtNHX polypeptides. The sequences in Table 2

5 are useful to make probes to identity full length sequences or fragments (from the listed species or other species). One skilled in the art would be able to design a probe based on a polypeptide or peptide fragment. The invention includes nucleic acid molecules of about: 10 to 50 nucleotides, 50 to 200 nucleotides, 200 to 500 nucleotides, 500 to 1000 nucleotides, 1000 to 1500 nucleotides, 1500 to 1700 nucleotides, 1700 to 2000

10 nucleotides, 2000 to 2500 nucleotides or at least 2500 nucleotides and which include all or part of the sequences (or corresponding nucleic acid molecule) in Table 2. The invention also includes peptides and polypeptides of about: 10 to 50 amino acids, 50 to 200 amino acids, 200 to 500 amino acids, 500 to 750 amino acids or at least 750 amino acids which encode all or part of the polypeptides in Table 2 (wherein the polypeptide is

15 produced according to a reading frame aligned with an AtNHX polypeptide). Possible modifications to these sequences will also be apparent. The polypeptide and nucleic acid molecules are also useful in research experiments or in bioinformatics to locate other sequences. The nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides preferably provide Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and are capable of moving monovalent cations from the

20 cytosol of the cell into vacuoles or the extracellular space (in this application, extracellular space refers to the space outside a cell in an organism or the space outside a cultured cell).

Table 2

Organism	GenBank Accession No.
Yeast ( <i>S. pombe</i> ) (Fig. 8(a))	3850064
Yeast ( <i>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</i> ) (Fig. 8(b))	927695
Rice EST (Fig. 8(c))	C 91832
Rice EST (Fig. 8(d))	C 91861
Rice EST (Fig. 8(e))	AV032544
Medicago Trunculata EST (Fig. 8(f))	AA660573
Hordeum Vulgare STS (Fig. 8g))	L 44032

25 As shown in Table 3 below, many nucleic acid molecules identified in *Arabidopsis thaliana* have striking DNA sequence similarity to nucleic acid molecules encoding the homologous polypeptide in other plant species. Using the techniques

- described in this application and others known in the art, it will be apparent that the nucleic acid molecule encoding the homologous  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger in other plant species including, but not limited to plants of agricultural and commercial interest, will have DNA sequence identity (homology) at least about > 17%, >20%, >25%, >35% to a
- 5 DNA sequence shown in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). Some plants species may have DNA with a sequence identity (homology) at least about: >50%, >60%, >70%, >80% or >90% more preferably at least about >95%, >99% or >99.5%, to a DNA sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). The invention also includes modified nucleic acid molecules from plants other than *Arabidopsis thaliana*
- 10 which have sequence identity at least about: > 17%, >20%, >25%, >35%, >50%, >60%, >70%, >80% or >90% more preferably at least about >95%, >99% or >99.5%, to an AtNHX sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). Modified nucleic acid molecules are discussed below. Preferably about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 to 10, 10 to 25, 26 to 50 or 51 to 100, or 101 to 250 nucleotides or amino acids are modified. Sequence
- 15 identity is most preferably calculated as the number of identical amino acid residues expressed as a percentage of the length of the shorter of the two sequences in a pairwise alignment. The pairwise alignment is constructed preferably using the Clustal W program preferably using the following parameter settings: fixed gap penalty=10, floating gap penalty=10, protein weight matrix=BLOSUM62. For example, if a
- 20 nucleotide sequence (called "Sequence A") has 90% identity to a portion of the nucleotide sequence in Figure 1(a), then Sequence A will be identical to the referenced portion of the nucleotide sequence in Figure 8, except that Sequence A may include up to 10 point mutations, such as substitutions with other nucleotides, per each 100 nucleotides of the referenced portion of the nucleotide sequence in Figure 8.
- 25 Polypeptides having sequence identity may be similarly identified.

The invention also includes nucleic acid molecules encoding polypeptides having sequence similarity taking into account conservative amino acid substitutions. Sequence similarity (and preferred percentages) are discussed below.

- It will be apparent that nucleic acid molecule encoding the homologous  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$
- 30 exchanger in other species (preferably plants) including, but not limited to plants of agricultural and commercial interest, will hybridize to all or part of a sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof) under low, moderate (also called intermediate conditions) or high stringency conditions. Preferred hybridization conditions are described below.

The invention includes the nucleic acid molecules from other plants as well as methods of obtaining the nucleic acid molecules by, for example, screening a cDNA library or other DNA collection with a probe of the invention (such as a probe comprising at least about: 10 or preferably at least 15 or 30 nucleotides of AtNHX1, AtNHX2, 5 AtNHX3 or AtNHX4 or a sequence in figure 5) and detecting the presence of a TNHx or PNHX nucleic acid molecule. Another method involves comparing the AtNHX sequences (eg in figure 1 or 5) to other sequences, for example using bioinformatics techniques such as database searches or alignment strategies, and detecting the presence of a TNHx or PNHX nucleic acid molecule or polypeptide. The invention 10 includes the nucleic acid molecule and/or polypeptide obtained according to the methods of the invention. The invention also includes methods of using the nucleic acid molecules, for example to make probes, in research experiments or to transform host cells or make transgenic plants. These methods are as described below.

The polypeptides encoded by the homologous TNHx or PNHX nucleic acid 15 molecules in other species will have amino acid sequence identity. The preferred percentage of sequence identity for sequences of the invention includes sequences having identity of at least about: 30% to AtNHX1, 31% to AtNHX2, 36% to AtNHX3, and 36% to AtNHX4. Sequence identity may be at least about: >20%, >25%, >28%, >30%, >35%, >40%, >50% to an amino acid sequence shown in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial 20 sequence thereof). Some polypeptides may have a sequence identity of at least about: >60%, >70%, >80% or >90%, more preferably at least about: >95%, >99% or >99.5% to an amino acid sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). Identity is calculated according to methods known in the art. Sequence identity is most preferably assessed by the Clustal W program. The invention also includes modified polypeptides 25 from plants which have sequence identity at least about: >20%, >25%, >28%, >30%, >35%, >40%, >50%, >60%, >70%, >80% or >90% more preferably at least about >95%, >99% or >99.5%, to an AtNHX sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). Modified polypeptides molecules are discussed below. Preferably about: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 to 10, 10 to 25, 26 to 50 or 51 to 100, or 101 to 250 nucleotides or amino acids 30 are modified.

**Table 3**Plant Vacuolar H<sup>+</sup>-PPiase (vacuolar pyrophosphatase)

	<u>Polypeptide</u>	<u>DNA</u>
Arabidopsis (Accession # 282878)	100%	100%
5 Beet (Accession # 485742)	88.7%	72.8%
Tobacco (Accession # 1076627)	89.9%	68.4%
Rice (Accession # 1747296)	85%	70.4%

Tonoplast Intrinsic Polypeptide (water channel)

	<u>Polypeptide</u>	<u>DNA</u>
10 Arabidopsis (Accession # X63551)	100%	100%
Curcubita (Cucumber) (Accession # D45078)	66.5%	39.1%
Raphanus (radish) (Accession # D84669)	56.7%	37.4%
Helianthus (Accession # X95951)	50.4%	35.2%

High Affinity Ammonium Transporter

	<u>Polypeptide</u>	<u>DNA</u>
15 Arabidopsis (Accession # X75879)	100%	100%
Tomato (Accession # X95098)	73.5%	62.9%
Rice (Accession # AF001505)	66.6%	58.1%

**Nucleic Acid Molecules and Polypeptides Similar to AtNHX**

20 Those skilled in the art will recognize that the nucleic acid molecule sequences in figure 1(a), (b), (d) and (e) are not the only sequences which may be used to provide increased salt tolerance in plants. The genetic code is degenerate so other nucleic acid molecules which encode a polypeptide identical to an amino acid sequence in figure 1(a), (b), (d) or (e) may also be used. The sequence of the other nucleic acid molecules

25 of this invention may also be varied without changing the polypeptide encoded by the sequence. Consequently, the nucleic acid molecule constructs described below and in the accompanying examples for the preferred nucleic acid molecules, vectors, and transformants of the invention are merely illustrative and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

30 The sequences of the invention can be prepared according to numerous techniques. The invention is not limited to any particular preparation means. For example, the nucleic acid molecules of the invention can be produced by cDNA cloning, genomic cloning, DNA synthesis, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology, or a combination of these approaches ([31] or Current Protocols in Molecular Biology (F. M.

Ausbel et al., 1989). Sequences may be synthesized using well known methods and equipment, such as automated synthesizers. Nucleic acid molecules may be amplified by the polymerase chain reaction. Polypeptides may, for example, be synthesized or produced recombinantly.

## 5 Sequence Identity

The invention includes modified nucleic acid molecules with a sequence identity at least about: >17%, >20%, >30%, >40%, >50%, >60%, >70%, >80% or >90% more preferably at least about >95%, >99% or >99.5%, to a DNA sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). Preferably about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 to 10, 10 to 25, 26 to 50  
10 or 51 to 100, or 101 to 250 nucleotides or amino acids are modified. Identity is calculated according to methods known in the art. Sequence identity is most preferably assessed by the Clustal W program. For example, if a nucleotide sequence (called "Sequence A") has 90% identity to a portion of the nucleotide sequence in Figure 1(a), then Sequence A will be identical to the referenced portion of the nucleotide sequence  
15 in Figure 1, except that Sequence A may include up to 10 point mutations, such as deletions or substitutions with other nucleotides, per each 100 nucleotide of the referenced portion of the nucleotide sequence in Figure 1. Nucleotide sequences functionally equivalent to the PNHX or AtNHX sequences can occur in a variety of forms as described below. Polypeptides having sequence identity may be similarly identified.

20 The polypeptides encoded by the homologous NHX, PNHX  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchange nucleic acid molecule in other species will have amino acid sequence identity (also known as homology) at least about: >20%, >25%, >28%, >30%, >40% or >50% to an amino acid sequence shown in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). Some plants species may have polypeptides with a sequence identity (homology) of at least  
25 about: >60%, >70%, >80% or >90%, more preferably at least about: >95%, >99% or >99.5% to all or part of an amino acid sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). Identity is calculated according to methods known in the art. Sequence identity is most preferably assessed by the Clustal W program. Preferably about: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 to 10, 10 to 25, 26 to 50 or 51 to 100, or 101 to 250 nucleotides or amino acids are  
30 modified.

The invention includes nucleic acid molecules with mutations that cause an amino acid change in a portion of the polypeptide not involved in providing salt tolerance and ion transport or an amino acid change in a portion of the polypeptide involved in providing salt tolerance so that the mutation increases or decreases the activity of the  
35 polypeptide.

### Hybridization

Other functional equivalent forms of the *AtNHX* nucleic acid molecules encoding nucleic acids can be isolated using conventional DNA-DNA or DNA-RNA hybridization techniques. These nucleic acid molecules and the *AtNHX* sequences can be modified  
5 without significantly affecting their activity.

The present invention also includes nucleic acid molecules that hybridize to one or more of the sequences in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof) or their complementary sequences, and that encode expression for peptides or polypeptides exhibiting substantially equivalent activity as that of an *AtNHX* polypeptide produced by  
10 the DNA in figure 1 or their variants. Such nucleic acid molecules preferably hybridize to the sequences under low, moderate (intermediate), or high stringency conditions. (see Sambrook et al. (Most recent edition) *Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual*, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y.). Preferable hybridization conditions are about those in Table 4.

15 The present invention also includes nucleic acid molecules from any source, whether modified or not, that hybridize to genomic DNA, cDNA, or synthetic DNA molecules that encode the amino acid sequence of an *AtNHX* polypeptide, or genetically degenerate forms, under salt and temperature conditions equivalent to those described in this application, and that code for a peptide, polypeptide or polypeptide that  
20 has  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity. Preferably the polypeptide has the same or similar activity as that of an *AtNHX* polypeptide. The nucleic acid molecules may encode *TNHX* or *PNHX* polypeptides. A nucleic acid molecule described above is considered to be functionally equivalent to an *AtNHX* nucleic acid molecule (and thereby having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity) of the present invention if the polypeptide produced by the  
25 nucleic acid molecule displays the following characteristics: the polypeptide mediates the proton-dependent sodium transport and sodium-dependent proton transport in intact cells, isolated organelles and purified membrane vesicles. These sodium/proton movements should be higher (preferably at least about 50% higher and most preferably at least about 100% higher) than the proton movements observed in the presence of a  
30 background of potassium ions and/or other monovalent cations (i.e. rubidium, cesium, etc., but most preferably not lithium) (13,14).

The invention also includes nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides having sequence similarity taking into account conservative amino acid substitutions. Sequence similarity (and preferred percentages) are discussed below.

Modifications to Nucleic Acid Molecule or Polypeptide Sequence

Changes in the nucleotide sequence which result in production of a chemically equivalent or chemically similar amino acid sequences are included within the scope of the invention. Variants of the polypeptides of the invention may occur naturally, for example, by mutation, or may be made, for example, with polypeptide engineering techniques such as site directed mutagenesis, which are well known in the art for substitution of amino acids. For example, a hydrophobic residue, such as glycine can be substituted for another hydrophobic residue such as alanine. An alanine residue may be substituted with a more hydrophobic residue such as leucine, valine or isoleucine. A negatively charged amino acid such as aspartic acid may be substituted for glutamic acid. A positively charged amino acid such as lysine may be substituted for another positively charged amino acid such as arginine.

Therefore, the invention includes polypeptides having conservative changes or substitutions in amino acid sequences. Conservative substitutions insert one or more amino acids which have similar chemical properties as the replaced amino acids. The invention includes sequences where conservative substitutions are made that do not destroy  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity of the transporter polypeptide. The preferred percentage of sequence similarity for sequences of the invention includes sequences having at least about: 48% similarity to AtNHX1, 48% similarity to AtNHX2, 56% similarity to AtNHX3, and 56% similarity to AtNHX4. The similarity may also be at least about: 60% similarity, 75% similarity, 80% similarity, 90% similarity, 95% similarity, 97% similarity, 98% similarity, 99% similarity, or more preferably at least about 99.5% similarity, wherein the polypeptide  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  has transporter activity. The invention also includes nucleic acid molecules encoding polypeptides, with the polypeptides having at least about: at least about: 48% similarity to AtNHX1, 48% similarity to AtNHX2, 56% similarity to AtNHX3, and 56% similarity to AtNHX4. The similarity may also be at least about: 60% similarity, 75% similarity, 80% similarity, 90% similarity, 95% similarity, 97% similarity, 98% similarity, 99% similarity, or more preferably at least about 99.5% similarity, wherein the polypeptide  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  has transporter activity, to an amino acid sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof) considering conservative amino acid changes, wherein the polypeptide has  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity. Sequence similarity is preferably calculated as the number of similar amino acids in a pairwise alignment expressed as a percentage of the shorter of the two sequences in the alignment. The pairwise alignment is preferably constructed using the Clustal W program, using the following parameter settings: fixed gap penalty=10, floating gap

penalty=10, protein weight matrix=BLOSUM62. Similar amino acids in a pairwise alignment are those pairs of amino acids which have positive alignment scores defined in the preferred protein weight matrix (BLOSUM62). The protein weight matrix BLOSUM62 is considered appropriate for the comparisons described here by those skilled in the art of bioinformatics. (The reference for the clustal w program (algorithm) is Thompson, J.D., Higgins, D.G. and Gibson, T.J. (1994) CLUSTAL W: improving the sensitivity of progressive multiple sequence alignment through sequence weighting, positions-specific gap penalties and weight matrix choice. *Nucleic Acids Research*, 22:4673-4680; and the reference for BLOSUM62 scoring matrix is Henikoff, S. and Henikoff, J.G. (1993) Performance evaluation of amino acid substitution matrices. *Proteins*, 7:49-61.)

Polypeptides comprising one or more d-amino acids are contemplated within the invention. Also contemplated are polypeptides where one or more amino acids are acetylated at the N-terminus. Those of skill in the art recognize that a variety of techniques are available for constructing polypeptide mimetics with the same or similar desired biological activity ( $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity) as the corresponding polypeptide compound of the invention but with more favorable activity than the polypeptide with respect to solubility, stability, and/or susceptibility to hydrolysis and proteolysis. See, for example, Morgan and Gainor, *Ann. Rep. Med. Chem.*, 24:243-252 (1989). Examples of polypeptide mimetics are described in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,643,873. Other patents describing how to make and use mimetics include, for example in, 5,786,322, 5,767,075, 5,763,571, 5,753,226, 5,683,983, 5,677,280, 5,672,584, 5,668,110, 5,654,276, 5,643,873. Mimetics of the polypeptides of the invention may also be made according to other techniques known in the art. For example, by treating a polypeptide of the invention with an agent that chemically alters a side group by converting a hydrogen group to another group such as a hydroxy or amino group. Mimetics preferably include sequences that are either entirely made of amino acids or sequences that are hybrids including amino acids and modified amino acids or other organic molecules.

The invention also includes hybrid nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides, for example where a nucleotide sequence from one species of plant is combined with a nucleotide sequence from another sequence of plant, mammal or yeast to produce a fusion polypeptide. The invention includes a fusion protein having at least two components, wherein a first component of the fusion protein comprises a polypeptide of the invention, preferably a full length AtNHX polypeptide. The second component of the



fusion protein preferably comprises a tag, for example GST, an epitope tag or an enzyme. The fusion protein may comprise lacZ.

The invention also includes polypeptide fragments of the polypeptides of the invention which may be used to confer salt tolerance if the fragments retain  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity. The invention also includes polypeptides fragments of the polypeptides of the invention which may be used as a research tool to characterize the polypeptide or its activity. Such polypeptides preferably consist of at least 5 amino acids. In preferred embodiments, they may consist of 6 to 10, 11 to 15, 16 to 25, 26 to 50, 51 to 75, 76 to 100 or 101 to 250 amino acids of the polypeptides of the invention (or longer amino acid sequences). The fragments preferably have sodium/proton transporter activity. Fragments may include sequences with one or more amino acids removed, for example, C-terminus amino acids in an AtNHX sequence.

The invention also includes a composition comprising all or part of an isolated TNHx or PNHX (preferably AtNHX) nucleic acid molecule of the invention and a carrier, preferably in a composition for plant transformation. The invention also includes a composition comprising an isolated TNHx or PNHX polypeptide (preferably AtNHX) and a carrier, preferably for studying polypeptide activity.

#### **Recombinant Nucleic Acid Molecules**

The invention also includes recombinant nucleic acid molecules comprising a nucleic acid molecule of the invention and a promoter sequence, operatively linked so that the promoter enhances transcription of the nucleic acid molecule in a host cell (the nucleic acid molecules of the invention may be used in an isolated native gene or a chimeric gene (for example, where a nucleic acid molecule coding region is connected to one or more heterologous sequences to form a gene). The promoter sequence is preferably a constitutive promoter sequence or an inducible promoter sequence, operatively linked so that the promoter enhances transcription of the DNA molecule in a host cell. The promoter may be of a type not naturally associated with the cell. Transcription is enhanced with promoters known in the art such as the "Super-promoter" [20] or the 35S promoter of cauliflower mosaic virus [21].

Inducible promoters are also used. These include:

- a) drought- and ABA-inducible promoters which may include ABA-responsive elements [22,23]
- b) heat shock-inducible promoters which may contain HSEs (heat shock elements) as well as CCAAT box sequences [24]

- c) salt-inducible promoters which may include AT and PR elements [25]
- d) Copper-inducible promoter that includes ACE1 binding sites [26]
- e) steroid-inducible promoter that includes the glucocorticoid response element along with an expression vector coding for a mammalian steroid receptor [27].

5

In addition, tissue specific expression is achieved with the use of tissue-specific promoters such as, the Fd (Ferredoxin) promoter that mediates high levels of expression in green leaves [28] and peroxidase promoter for root-specific expression [29]. These promoters vary in their transcription initiation rate and/or efficiency.

10

A recombinant nucleic acid molecule for conferring salt tolerance may also contain suitable transcriptional or translational regulatory elements. Suitable regulatory elements may be derived from a variety of sources, and they may be readily selected by one with ordinary skill in the art. Examples of regulatory elements include: a transcriptional promoter and enhancer or RNA polymerase binding sequence, a ribosomal binding sequence, including a translation initiation signal. Additionally, depending on the vector employed, other genetic elements, such as selectable markers, may be incorporated into the recombinant molecule. Markers facilitate the selection of a transformed host cell. Such markers include genes associated with temperature sensitivity, drug resistance, or enzymes associated with phenotypic characteristics of the host organisms.

15

Nucleic acid molecule expression levels are controlled with a transcription initiation region that regulates transcription of the nucleic acid molecule or nucleic acid molecule fragment of interest in a plant, bacterial or yeast cell. The transcription initiation region may be part of the construct or the expression vector. The transcription initiation domain or promoter includes an RNA polymerase binding site and an mRNA initiation site. Other regulatory regions that may be used include an enhancer domain and a termination region. The regulatory elements described above may be from animal, plant, yeast, bacterial, fungal, viral or other sources, including synthetically produced elements and mutated elements.

20

Methods of modifying DNA and polypeptides, preparing recombinant nucleic acid molecules and vectors, transformation of cells, expression of polypeptides are known in the art. For guidance, one may consult the following US patent nos. 5,840,537, 5,850,025, 5,858,719, 5,710,018, 5,792,851, 5,851,788, 5,759,788, 5,840,530, 5,789,202, 5,871,983, 5,821,096, 5,876,991, 5,422,108, 5,612,191, 5,804,693, 5,847,258, 5,880,328, 5,767,369, 5,756,684, 5,750,652, 5,824,864, 5,763,211,

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5,767,375, 5,750,848, 5,859,337, 5,563,246, 5,346,815, and WO9713843. Many of these patents also provide guidance with respect to experimental assays, probes and antibodies, methods, transformation of host cells and regeneration of plants, which are described below. These patents, like all other patents, publications (such as articles and  
5 Genbank publications) in this application, are incorporated by reference in their entirety.

#### Host Cells Including a Salt Tolerance Nucleic Acid Molecule

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, a plant or yeast cell is transformed with a nucleic acid molecule of the invention or a fragment of a nucleic acid molecule and inserted in a vector.

10 Another embodiment of the invention relates to a method of transforming a host cell with a nucleic acid molecule of the invention or a fragment of a nucleic acid molecule, inserted in a vector. The invention also includes a vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. The TNH<sub>X</sub>, PNH<sub>X</sub> and AtNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecules can be cloned into a variety of vectors by means that are well known in the art. The  
15 recombinant nucleic acid molecule may be inserted at a site in the vector created by restriction enzymes. A number of suitable vectors may be used, including cosmids, plasmids, bacteriophage, baculoviruses and viruses. Suitable vectors are capable of reproducing themselves and transforming a host cell. The invention also relates to a method of expressing polypeptides in the host cells. A nucleic acid molecule of the  
20 invention may be used to transform virtually any type of plant, including both monocots and dicots. The expression host may be any cell capable of expressing TNH<sub>X</sub>, PNH<sub>X</sub>, such as a cell selected from the group consisting of a seed (where appropriate), plant cell, bacterium, yeast, fungus, protozoa, algae, animal and animal cell.

Levels of nucleic acid molecule expression may be controlled with nucleic acid  
25 molecules or nucleic acid molecule fragments that code for anti-sense RNA inserted in the vectors described above.

*Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-mediated transformation, particle-bombardment-mediated transformation, direct uptake, microinjection, coprecipitation and electroporation-mediated nucleic acid molecule transfer are useful to transfer a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter nucleic acid molecule into seeds (where appropriate) or host cells, preferably  
30 plant cells, depending upon the plant species. The invention also includes a method for constructing a host cell capable of expressing a nucleic acid molecule of the invention, the method comprising introducing into said host cell a vector of the invention. The genome of the host cell may or may not also include a functional TNH<sub>X</sub> or PNH<sub>X</sub> gene.  
35 The invention also includes a method for expressing a TNH<sub>X</sub> or PNH<sub>X</sub> transporter

polypeptide in the host cell or a plant, plant part, seed or plant cell of the invention, the method comprising culturing the host cell under conditions suitable for gene expression. The method preferably also includes recovering the expressed polypeptide from the culture.

- 5           The invention includes the host cell comprising the recombinant nucleic acid molecule and vector as well as progeny of the cell. Preferred host cells are fungal cells, yeast cells, bacterial cells, mammalian cells, bird cells, reptile cells, amphibious cells, microorganism cells and plant cells. Host cells may be cultured in conventional nutrient media. The media may be modified as appropriate for inducing promoters, amplifying
- 10          genes or selecting transformants. The culture conditions, such as temperature, composition and pH will be apparent. After transformation, transformants may be identified on the basis of a selectable phenotype. A selectable phenotype can be conferred by a selectable marker in the vector.

#### **Transgenic Plants and Seeds**

- 15           Plant cells are useful to produce tissue cultures, seeds or whole plants. The invention includes a plant, plant part, seed, or progeny thereof including a host cell transformed with a PNHX nucleic acid molecule. The plant part is preferably a leaf, a stem, a flower, a root, a seed or a tuber.

- 20           The invention includes a transformed (transgenic) plant having increased salt tolerance, the transformed plant containing a nucleic acid molecule sequence encoding for  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter polypeptide activity and the nucleic acid molecule sequence having been introduced into the plant by transformation under conditions whereby the transformed plant expresses a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter in active form.

- 25           The methods and reagents for producing mature plants from cells are known in the art. The invention includes a method of producing a genetically transformed plant which expresses PNHX or TNHx polypeptide by regenerating a genetically transformed plant from the plant cell, seed or plant part of the invention. The invention also includes the transgenic plant produced according to the method. Alternatively, a plant may be transformed with a vector of the invention.

- 30           The invention also includes a method of preparing a plant with increased salt tolerance, the method comprising transforming the plant with a nucleic acid molecule which encodes a TNHx transporter polypeptide, a PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide encoding a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter polypeptide capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell, and recovering the transformed plant with increased salt tolerance.

The invention also includes a method of preparing a plant with increased salt tolerance, the method comprising transforming a plant cell with a nucleic acid molecule which encodes a TNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide, a PNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide encoding a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter polypeptide capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell, and producing the transformed plant with increased salt tolerance.

Overexpression of Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchangers leads to an improved ability of the transgenic plants to uptake more monovalent cations from the growth media (soil) leading to an increased or enhanced tissue expansion. Figure 7 shows that transformed plants have grown larger even where no NaCl is added to soil. Therefore, the invention also relates to methods of producing or growing plants with increased tissue expansion (this could be manifested as enhanced size, growth or growth potential and may appear as increased or enhanced root, crown, shoot, stem, leaf, flower size or abundance in comparison to a wild type plant). The methods of preparing plants that have increased tissue expansion are the same as the methods for preparing a plant with increased salt tolerance described in this application (or the methods are easily adapted, to the extent that there is a difference in the methods).

The plants whose cells may be transformed with a nucleic acid molecule of this invention and used to produce transgenic plants include, but are not limited to the following:

Target plants:

Group I (transformable preferably via *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*)

Arabidopsis  
Potato  
Tomato  
25 Brassica  
Cotton  
Sunflower  
Strawberries  
Spinach  
30 Lettuce  
Rice

Group II (transformable preferably via biolistic particle delivery systems (particle bombardment))

5 Soybean  
Rice  
Corn  
Wheat  
Rye  
Barley  
10 Atriplex  
Salicornia

The nucleic acid molecule may also be used with other plants such as oat, barley, hops, sorghum, alfalfa, sunflower, alfalfa, beet, pepper, tobacco, melon, squash, 15 pea, cacao, hemp, coffee plants and grape vines. Trees may also be transformed with the nucleic acid molecule. Such trees include, but are not limited to maple, birch, pine, oak and poplar. Decorative flowering plants such as carnations and roses may also be transformed with the nucleic acid molecule of the invention. Plants bearing nuts such as peanuts may also be transformed with the salt tolerance nucleic acid molecule. A list of 20 preferable plants is in Table 5.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, plant tissue cells or cultures which demonstrate salt tolerance are selected and plants which are salt tolerant are regenerated from these cultures. Methods of regeneration will be apparent to those skilled in the art (see Examples below, also). These plants may be reproduced, for 25 example by cross pollination with a plant that is salt tolerant or a plant that is not salt tolerant. If the plants are self-pollinated, homozygous salt tolerant progeny may be identified from the seeds of these plants, for example by growing the seeds in a saline environment, using genetic markers or using an assay for salt tolerance. Seeds obtained from the mature plants resulting from these crossings may be planted, grown 30 to sexual maturity and cross-pollinated or self-pollinated.

The nucleic acid molecule is also incorporated in some plant species by breeding methods such as back crossing to create plants homozygous for the salt resistance nucleic acid molecule.

A plant line homozygous for the salt tolerance nucleic acid molecule may be 35 used as either a male or female parent in a cross with a plant line lacking the salt tolerance nucleic acid molecule to produce a hybrid plant line which is uniformly heterozygous for the nucleic acid molecule. Crosses between plant lines homozygous

for the salt resistance nucleic acid molecule are used to generate hybrid seed homozygous for the resistance nucleic acid molecule.

5 The nucleic acid molecule of the invention may also be used as a marker in transformation experiments with plants. A salt sensitive plant may be transformed with a salt tolerance nucleic acid molecule and a nucleic acid molecule of interest which are linked. Plants transformed with the nucleic acid molecule of interest will display improved growth in a saline environment relative to the non-transformed plants.

#### Fragments/Probes

10 Preferable fragments (fragments are also referred to as polypeptide fragments or peptide fragments) include 10 to 50, 50 to 100, 100 to 250, 250 to 500, 500 to 1000, 1000 to 1500, or 1500 or more nucleotides of a nucleic acid molecule of the invention. A fragment may be generated by removing a single nucleotide from a sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). Fragments may or may not have  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity.

15 The nucleic acid molecules of the invention (including a fragment of a sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof) (such as [SEQ ID NO:1], [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:5] or [SEQ ID NO:7]) can be used as probes to detect nucleic acid molecules according to techniques known in the art (for example, see US patent nos. 5,792,851 and 5,851,788). The probes may be used to detect nucleic acid molecules  
20 that encode polypeptides similar to the polypeptides of the invention. For example, a probe having at least about 10 bases will hybridize to similar sequences under stringent hybridization conditions (Sambrook et al. 1989, Molecular Cloning, A Laboratory Manual, Cold Spring Harbor).

The invention includes oligonucleotide probes made from the AtNHX sequences  
25 described in this application or other nucleotide sequences of the invention. The probes may be about 10 to 30 or 15 to 30 nucleotides in length and are preferably at least 30 or more nucleotides. A preferred probe is 5'-TTCTTCATATATCTTTGCCACCC-3' (coding for the amiloride binding domain) or at least about 10 or 15 nucleotides of this sequence. The invention also includes an oligonucleotide including at least 30  
30 consecutive nucleotides of an AtNHX molecule in Figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). The probes are useful to identify nucleic acids encoding AtNHX, polypeptides and proteins other than those described in the application, as well as peptides, polypeptides, and proteins have  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and preferably functionally equivalent to AtNHX. The oligonucleotide probes are capable of hybridizing to one or

more of the sequences shown in Figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof) or the other sequences of the invention under low, moderate or high stringency hybridization conditions. A nucleotide sequence encoding a polypeptide of the invention may be isolated from other organisms by screening a library under low, moderate or high stringency hybridization conditions with a detectable probe (e.g. a labeled probe). The activity of the polypeptide encoded by the nucleotide sequence may be assessed by cloning and expression of the DNA. After the expression product is isolated, the polypeptide is assayed for Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity as described in this application.

Functionally equivalent AtNHX, TNHx or PNHX nucleic acid molecules from other cells, or equivalent AtNHX, TNHx or PNHX -encoding cDNAs or synthetic DNAs, can also be isolated by amplification using Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) methods. Oligonucleotide primers, including degenerate primers, based on the amino acid sequence of the sequences in Figures 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof) can be prepared and used in conjunction with PCR technology employing reverse transcriptase to amplify functionally equivalent DNAs from genomic or cDNA libraries of other organisms. Alternatively, the oligonucleotides, including degenerate nucleotides, can be used as probes to screen cDNA libraries.

Thus, the invention includes an oligonucleotide probe comprising all or part of a nucleic acid in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof), or a complementary strand thereof. The probe is preferably labeled with a detectable marker. The invention also includes an oligonucleotide comprising at least 10, 15 or 30 nucleotides capable of specifically hybridizing with a sequence of nucleic acids of the nucleotide sequence set forth in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). The invention also includes a single strand DNA primer for amplification of PNHX nucleic acid, wherein the primer is selected from a nucleic acid sequence derived from a nucleic acid sequence in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof).

The invention also includes a method for identifying nucleic acid molecules encoding a TNHx, PNHX or AtNHX polypeptide. Techniques for performing the methods are described in, for example, US Patent Nos. 5,851,788 and 5,858,719. A preferred method includes contacting a sample containing nucleic acids with an oligonucleotide, wherein said contacting is effected under low, moderate or high stringency hybridization conditions, and identifying nucleic acids which hybridize thereto. Hybridization forms a hybridization complex. The presence of a complex correlates with the presence of a nucleic acid molecule encoding TNHx, plant PNHX polypeptide or



AtNHX in the sample. In a preferred method, the nucleic acid molecules are amplified by the polymerase chain reaction prior to hybridization.

#### KITS

5 The invention also includes a kit for conferring increased salt tolerance to a plant or a host cell including a nucleic acid molecule of the invention (preferably in a composition for the invention) and preferably reagents for transforming the plant or host cell.

The invention also includes a kit for detecting the presence of a TNHx or a PNHX nucleic acid molecule, comprising at least one oligonucleotide of the invention.  
10 Kits may be prepared according to known techniques, for example, see patent nos. 5,851,788 and 5,750,653.

#### Antibodies

The invention includes an isolated antibody immunoreactive with a polypeptide of the invention (see Example 1). The antibody may be labeled with a detectable  
15 marker or unlabeled. The antibody is preferably a monoclonal antibody or a polyclonal antibody. TNHx, PNHX or AtNHX antibodies can be employed to screen organisms containing TNHx, PNHX or AtNHX polypeptides. The antibodies are also valuable for immuno-purification of polypeptides from crude extracts.

The isolated antibody is preferably specifically reactive with a TNHx or PNHX  
20 transporter, preferably an AtNHX transporter. The transporter is preferably encoded by a nucleic acid molecule in figure 1 (or molecules that hybridize to a molecule in figure 1 under low, moderate or high stringency hybridization conditions or molecules having at least about: 17%, at least 20%, at least 25%, or at least 35% sequence identity (or the other preferred percentages of identity or sequence similarity described above) to a  
25 molecule in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). The transporter is preferably a polypeptide in figure 1 (or polypeptides having at least about: 28%, 35% sequence identity (or the other preferred percentages of identity or sequence similarity described above) to a polypeptide in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof). The antibody  
30 preferably does not cross-react with other transporter polypeptides. The antibody is preferably specifically reactive with a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence encoded by a nucleic acid molecule set forth in figure 1 or 5 (or a partial sequence thereof).

Examples of the preparation and use of antibodies are provided in US Patent Nos. 5,792,851 and 5,759,788. For other examples of methods of the preparation and

uses of monoclonal antibodies, see US Patent Nos. 5,688,681, 5,688,657, 5,683,693, 5,667,781, 5,665,356, 5,591,628, 5,510,241, 5,503,987, 5,501,988, 5,500,345 and 5,496,705. Examples of the preparation and uses of polyclonal antibodies are disclosed in US Patent Nos. 5,512,282, 4,828,985, 5,225,331 and 5,124,147.

- 5           The invention also includes methods of using the antibodies. For example, the invention includes a method for detecting the presence of TNH<sub>X</sub>, PNH<sub>X</sub> or AtNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide, by: a) contacting a sample containing one or more polypeptides with an antibody of the invention under conditions suitable for the binding of the antibody to polypeptides with which it is specifically reactive; b) separating unbound
- 10   polypeptides from the antibody; and c) detecting antibody which remains bound to one or more of the polypeptides in the sample.

#### Research Tool

- Cell cultures, seeds, plants and plant parts transformed with a nucleic acid molecule of the invention are useful as research tools. For example, one may obtain a
- 15   plant cell (or a cell line, such as an immortalized cell culture or a primary cell culture) that does not express AtNH<sub>X</sub>1, insert an AtNH<sub>X</sub>1 nucleic acid molecule in the cell, and assess the level of AtNH<sub>X</sub>1 expression and activity. Alternatively, PNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecules may be overexpressed in a plant that expresses a PNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecule. In another example, experimental groups of plants may be transformed with
- 20   vectors containing different types of PNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecules (or PNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecules similar to PNH<sub>X</sub> or fragments of PNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecules) to assess the levels of protein produced, its functionality and the phenotype of the plants (for example, phenotype in saline soil). The polypeptides are also useful for *in vitro* analysis of TNH<sub>X</sub>, PNH<sub>X</sub> or AtNH<sub>X</sub> activity or structure. For example, the polypeptides
- 25   produced can be used for microscopy or X-ray crystallography studies.

- The TNH<sub>X</sub>, PNH<sub>X</sub> or AtNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecules and polypeptides are also useful in assays. Assays are useful for identification and development of compounds to inhibit and/or enhance polypeptide function directly. For example, they are useful in an assay for evaluating whether test compounds are capable of acting as antagonists for
- 30   PNH<sub>X</sub> polypeptides by: (a) culturing cells containing: a nucleic acid molecule which expresses PNH<sub>X</sub> polypeptides (or polypeptides having PNH<sub>X</sub> or Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> activity) wherein the culturing is carried out in the presence of: increasing concentrations of at least one test compound whose ability to inhibit transport activity of PNH<sub>X</sub> polypeptide is sought to be determined, and a fixed concentration of salt; and (b) monitoring in the
- 35   cells the level of salt transported out of the cytosol as a function of the concentration of

the test compound, thereby indicating the ability of the test compound to inhibit PNHX transporter activity. Alternatively, the concentration of the test compound may be fixed and the concentration of salt may be increased.

Another experiment is an assay for evaluating whether test compounds are  
5 capable of acting as agonists for PNHX polypeptide characterized by being able to transport salt across a membrane, (or polypeptides having PNHX or Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity) by (a) culturing cells containing: a nucleic acid molecule which expresses PNHX polypeptide or (or polypeptides having PNHX activity) thereof, wherein said culturing is carried out in the presence of: fixed concentrations of at least one test compound whose  
10 ability to increase or enhance salt transport activity of PNHX polypeptide is sought to be determined, and an increasing concentration of salt; and (b) monitoring in the cells the level of salt transported out of the cytosol as a function of the concentration of the test compound, thereby indicating the ability of the test compound compound to increase or enhance PNHX polypeptide activity. Alternatively, the concentration of the test  
15 compound may be fixed and the concentration of salt may be increased. Suitable assays may be adapted from, for example, US patent no. 5,851,788. It is apparent that TNHX and AtNHX may also be used in assays.

#### Bioremediation

Soils containing excessive salt may be unable to grow plants in a manner  
20 suitable for agriculture. The invention includes a method for removing salt from a growth medium, comprising growing a plant transformed with a nucleic acid molecule of the invention and expressing a salt tolerance Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter polypeptide in the growth medium for a time period sufficient for the plant root to uptake and accumulate salt in the root or shoot biomass. The growth medium may be a solid medium, semi-  
25 solid medium, liquid medium or a combination thereof. It may include soil, sand, sludge, compost, or artificial soil mix. The shoot (leaf or stem) or and root biomass may be harvested. Preferably, a sufficient portion of the shoot biomass is not harvested and is left in the growth media to permit continued plant growth.

#### Using Exogenous Agents in Combination with a Vector

30 The nucleic acid molecules of the invention may be used with other nucleic acid molecules that relate to salt tolerance, for example, osmoregulant genes. Host cells or plants may be transformed with these nucleic acid molecules. Osmoregulants are disclosed, for example, in US Patent Nos. 5,563,324 and 5,639, 950.

It will be clear to those skilled in the art that sequences in figure 1(c) and 5(a) and (b) are also useful, for example in preparation of probes or as experimental tools or as antigens to which antibodies may be directed. The following Examples are intended to illustrate and assist in the further understanding of the invention. Particular materials employed, species, conditions and the like are not intended to limit the reasonable scope of the invention.

#### Example 1

##### Preparation of polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies.

Hydropathy profiles of the *Arabidopsis*  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport revealed a relatively hydrophilic domain (at the C-terminus) with possible regulatory functions. The C-terminus was sub-cloned into the pGEX - 2TK vector (Pharmacia) to allow the overexpression of the C-terminus polypeptide as a GST-fusion polypeptide in *E. coli*. The fusion polypeptide was purified by glutathione-affinity chromatography and used as an antigen in rabbits to obtain polyclonal antibodies [30].

Monoclonal antibodies are prepared in mice hybridomas according to established techniques [30] using the C-terminus polypeptide as described above. Polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies raised against other regulatory regions of the *Arabidopsis*  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport are also obtained as described above. The invention includes the antibodies and the hybridoma which secretes the monoclonal antibodies.

#### Example 2

##### Identification of homologous nucleic acid molecules from other plant species, preferably salt tolerant species.

Several experimental approaches are used to identify homologous nucleic acid molecules from salt tolerant species. a) We screen cDNA and genomic libraires from sugar beets (a moderate salt-tolerant crop, also known as red beet) under low-stringency conditions with an *Arabidopsis*  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport cDNA as a probe [31]; b) We apply PCR techniques using degenerate oligonucleotide primers designed according to the conserved regions of the *Arabidopsis*  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport [32]; c) We screen cDNA expression libraries from different plants (salt-tolerant and salt-sensitive) using antibodies raised against an *Arabidopsis*  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport [31]. We also use bioinformatics techniques to identify nucleic acid molecules. The invention includes methods of using such a nucleic acid molecule, for example to express a recombinant polypeptide in a transformed cell.

The techniques described above for isolating nucleic acid molecules from *Arabidopsis* and sugar beet are used to isolate a salt tolerance nucleic acid molecule from Atriplex and other plants.

### Example 3

#### 5 Overexpression of the PNHX transporter, preferably *Arabidopsis* transporter (AtNHX).

The  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport is expressed in *Arabidopsis* plants, although the wild type plants show impaired growth at NaCl concentrations higher than 75 mM. The  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport is overexpressed in these plants in order to improve their tolerance to high salt concentrations. A full length cDNA (preferably coding for the AtNHX1 polypeptide  
10 (AtNHX2, AtNHX3 or AtNHX4) cloned from an *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Columbia) seedling cDNA library is ligated into a pBINS1 vector [33]. This vector contains a constitutively strong promotor ("super-promotor" [20]). Also, T-DNA vectors (pBECKS) are used [34]. Constructs containing the AtNHX1 cDNA with the full  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport open reading frame in a sense orientation were selected by colony hybridization using the AtNHX1  
15 a probe and by restriction-digest analysis using BglII restriction endonuclease. These constructs are used to transform *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*, and these transformed *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* are used for transformation of *Arabidopsis* plants. The *Agrobacterium* for inoculation is grown at 28°C in a medium containing 5g/l Bacto Beef Extract, 5g/l Bacto-Peptone, 1g/l Bacto Yeast Extract, 240 mg  $\text{MgSO}_4$  and 5g/l sucrose.  
20 The pH will be adjusted to 7.2 with NaOH.

*Arabidopsis* seeds are washed and surface-sterilized in 5% (w/v) sodium hypochlorite containing 0.15% (v/v) Tween-20. The seeds are rinsed thoroughly with sterile distilled water. Seed aliquots are dispensed in flasks containing 45 ml of cocultivation medium (MS salts, 100 mM sucrose, 10 mg/l thiamine, 0.5 mg/l pyridoxine,  
25 0.5 mg/l nicotinic acid, 100 mg/l inositol and the pH adjusted to 6.0 with KOH. The flasks are incubated at 22°C under constant rotation (190 rpm) and constant light. After 10-18 h (time needed to break clumps of seeds) 5 ml of log phase of *Agrobacterium* ( $\text{OD}_{600}=0.75$ ) carrying the AtNHX1 construct are added. Twenty-four hours following the inoculation, the seeds are dried by filtration and sown into pre-soaked vermiculite. The  
30 flats containing the seeds are irrigated as required with a half-Hoagland solution. The flats are covered with plastic to prevent desiccation and maintained at low artificial illumination. After 3 days the flats are transferred to the greenhouse (the plastic cover removed) under a 16/8 day/night cycle. Supplementary light is provided by high pressure sodium vapor lights. Seven weeks after sowing, the plants are dried  
35 thoroughly and the seeds (T2) harvested. Transformation efficiency is estimated by

plating 100,000 seeds (approximately 2.5 g of seeds) on agar plates containing 50 mg/l kanamycin in a medium containing 1% (w/v) sucrose, 0.8 (w/v) agar, MS salts and a pH 6.0 adjusted with KOH. The plates are transferred to a growth room at 25°C under continuous light. After 10 days the kanamycin-resistant seedlings are transferred to new growth medium for 2 weeks and then transferred to small pots containing vermiculite. At senescence (8 weeks) the seeds are collected from single plants (T3). These seeds are germinated and used to assess salt tolerance of the transgenic plants.

#### Example 4

##### Overexpression of TNHx or PNHX in other plants.

10 In a preferred method, overexpression of PNHX, preferably AtNHX1, AtNHX2, AtNHX3 or AtNHX4, in a number of plants (potato, tomato, brassica, cotton, sunflower, strawberries, spinach, lettuce, rice, soybean, corn, wheat, rye, barley, atriplex, salicornia, and others) is achieved by *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-based transformation and/or particle bombardment (AtNHX2, AtNHX3, AtNHX4 are also useful in this example). The full length cDNA (coding for the AtNHX1) is ligated into the pBINS1 vector or pBECKS (as described above) and these constructs are used to transform *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* strain LBA4404. *Agrobacterium* used for inoculation is grown as described above. Cultured cells (callus), leaf explants, shoot and root cultures are used as targets for transformation. The targeted tissues are co-cultivated with the bacteria for 1 - 2 days. Afterwards, the tissue is transferred to a growth media containing kanamycin. After one week the tissue is transferred to a regeneration medium containing MS salts, 1% sucrose, 2.5 mg/l 3-benzyladenine, 1 mg/l zeatin, 0.75% agar and kanamycin. Weekly transfers to fresh regeneration media are performed.

25 In another preferred embodiment, overexpression constructs carrying the AtNHX1 cDNA are introduced into an electro-competent *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* (LBA4404) by electroporation. The *Agrobacteria* are plated on LB plates containing 50 mg/L kanamycin and grown for ~2 days at 30°C to select for bacteria carrying the overexpression constructs. One liter liquid LB+kanamycin (50mg/L) is inoculated with a single *Agrobacterium* colony selected from the LB (kanamycin 50mg/L) plates. The culture is grown to a minimum of OD=1 (600nm) for 2-3 days. The *Agrobacteria* are then pelleted and resuspended in 1L infiltration medium (IM - 0.5XMS salts; 0.5 g/L MES; 5% sucrose; 0.03% Silwet L-77). Flowering *Arabidopsis* plants with primary bolts reaching ~15cm are used for the transformation procedure (T1). Pots of *Arabidopsis* plants are dunked into the IM solution containing the *Agrobacteria* and left submerged for 2-6 minutes. The same procedure can be repeated after 8-12 days on the same plants.

Plants are allowed to senesce, the plants are dried thoroughly and the seeds harvested. Seeds are plated on agar plates containing 25 mg/L kanamycin in a medium containing MS salts, 0.8% (w/v) agar adjusted to pH 6.0 with KOH. The plates are transferred to a growth room at 25°C under continuous light. After 10 days the kanamycin-resistant seedlings (T2) are transferred to small pots containing vermiculite. At senescence (~8 weeks) the seeds are collected from single plants and plated on agar plates containing MS salts and 25mg/L kanamycin. After 10 days the kanamycin-resistant seedlings (T3) are transferred to small pots containing vermiculite. Seeds produced by these plants are germinated and used to assess salt tolerance of the transgenic plants. A biolistic particle delivery system (particle bombardment) is also used for the overexpression of NHX (AtNHX1, AtNHX2, AtNHX3 or AtNHX4 are useful for this example). Constructs made using a plasmid vector preferably carrying a constitutive promoter, the AtNHX1 open reading frame in a sense orientation and a NOS termination site are used. Plasmid DNA is precipitated into 1.25 mg of 1-2 µm gold particles using 25 µl of 2.5 M CaCl<sub>2</sub> and 10 µl of 0.1 M thiamine (free base). DNA-coated particles are washed with 125 µl of 100% ethanol and then resuspended in 30 µl ethanol. The samples are sonicated to obtain an efficient dispersion, and the samples are aliquoted to obtain delivery disks containing 3 µg of DNA each. Particle bombardment is optimized according to the specific tissue to be transformed. Tissue samples are placed in Petri dishes containing 4.5 g/l basal MS salts, 1 mg/l thiamine, 10 mg/l myoinositol, 30 g/l sucrose, 2.5 mg/l amphotericin and 10 mM K<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub> at pH 5.7. After bombardment the petri dishes are incubated for 18 - 24 hours. Tissue is regenerated in plates with growth media containing the selective marker. Rooting is initiated and transformed plants are grown under optimal growth conditions in growth chambers. After 2 - 4 weeks the seedlings are transferred to new growth medium for 2 weeks and then transferred to small pots containing vermiculite. At senescence the seeds are collected from single plants. These seeds are germinated and used to assess salt tolerance of the transgenic plants.

#### Example 5

##### Overexpression of AtNHX1-homologs in other plants.

Overexpression of AtNHX1-homologs from other plant species, preferably salt tolerant species (i.e., sugar beet) in other plants (potato, tomato, brassica, cotton, sunflower, strawberries, spinach, lettuce, rice, soybean, corn, wheat, rye, barley, atriplex, salicornia, and others) is achieved by *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-based transformation and/or particle bombardment as described above (in Examples 3 and 4).

Regeneration of the transformed plants is performed as described in Examples 3 and 4 (AtNHX2, AtNHX3 or AtNHX4).

#### Example 6

##### Expression of PNHX, AtNHX1, AtNHX1 homologs and AtNHX1 derivatives in

##### 5 *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*.

Expression of TNHX or PNHX, preferably AtNHX1, AtNHX1 homologs (such as AtNHX2, AtNHX3, AtNHX4), and AtNHX1 derivatives in yeast is useful to assess and characterize the biochemical properties of the recombinant and native polypeptides. Expression in yeast also facilitates the study of interactions between AtNHX1, its  
10 homologs and derivatives with regulatory polypeptides. We have made conditional expression constructs by ligating the coding region of the AtNHX1 cDNA into two vectors, pYES2 (Invitrogen) and pYEP434 [35]. Both constructs provide galactose-inducible expression, but pYES2 has a URA3 selectable marker while pYEP434 has LEU2 as a selectable marker. Transformation by lithium acetate [36], 1994), is followed  
15 by selection on solid media containing amino acids appropriate for the selection of cells containing the transformation vector. For integrative transformation, the YXplac series of vectors for integrative transformation are used [37].

#### Example 7

##### Molecular characterization and functional analysis of Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchangers from

##### 20 *Arabidopsis* and other plants, preferably salt-tolerant (halophytes) plants.

We do molecular and biochemical characterization of the different Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchangers from *Arabidopsis* and other plants, preferably salt tolerant plants (halophytes). We determine the expression patterns of the different *Arabidopsis* putative exchangers. Using Northern blot analysis with isoform-specific cDNA probes  
25 under high stringency conditions and standard molecular biology protocols, we determine the tissue-specificity, developmental and salt-inducibility gene expression profiles of each isoform.

We employ common molecular biology procedures to isolate Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchangers from other plants (Table 5), in particular halophytes (such as *Beta vulgaris*, *Atriplex*,  
30 *Mesembryanthemum crystallinum*, etc.). We designed degenerate oligonucleotide PCR primers, based upon highly conserved regions within Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchangers (one within the amiloride-binding domain, and another within a region about 200 amino acid residues further downstream) from *Arabidopsis*, yeast, mammals, and *C. elegans*, to generate a 600 – 1,000 bp DNA fragments by PCR. Sequencing of these products



revealed significant homology to AtNHX1 and they are therefore being used as a probe to screen the different halophyte cDNA libraries to isolate the full-length cDNAs by standard methods. We use the nucleic acid molecules obtained in this procedure in methods of producing transgenic host cells and plants as described above.

5 We have subcloned unique regions from AtNHX1, AtNHX2 and AtNHX3 isoforms into a prokaryotic expression vector (pGEX2TK, Pharmacia) for the production of recombinant GST-fusion proteins that are being used for the generation of isoform-specific polyclonal antibodies in rabbits. Briefly, sequence-specific oligonucleotides, with 5' BamHI (sense strand) and 3' EcoRI (antisense strand) flanking restriction sites,  
10 were used for PCR-mediated amplification of the unique (partial) coding regions from each isoform, and the digested PCR products were ligated into EcoRI/BamHI-digested pGEX2TK vector. pGEX2TK plasmids containing the inserts corresponding to each AtNHX isoform were sequenced on both strands to verify the fidelity of the PCR reaction and were used for expression and purification of the recombinant GST-fusion proteins in  
15 *E. coli* (BL21pLysS) as per manufacturers instructions (Pharmacia). We follow an identical procedure to that described above to produce recombinant halophyte-PNHX GST-fusion protein in *E. coli*. Antibodies against the fusion proteins are produced in rabbits by standard procedures and their isoform-specificity are confirmed by western blotting using the different GST-fusion proteins. The antibodies are used in conjunction  
20 with subcellular membrane fractions (prepared from sucrose density gradients) [15] from various *Arabidopsis* and other plant tissues, preferably halophyte tissues and western blots to determine the subcellular localization of each Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger isoform. These localization studies assign functions to the various isoforms.

#### Example 8

25 Biochemical characterization and functional analysis of Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchangers from *Arabidopsis* and other plants, preferably salt-tolerant (halophytes) plants.

Biochemical characterization of the Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger isoforms is performed in (i) heterologous eukaryotic expression systems (baculovirus expression system in Sf9 insect cells, transgenic yeast); and in (ii) transgenic plants.

30 The use of heterologous expression systems allows the fast characterization of the kinetic properties of each exchanger isoform ( $K_m$ ,  $V_{max}$ , ion specificity). Baculovirus-infected Sf9 cells have proven to be a useful and adaptable system for high-level expression of correctly folded eukaryotic membrane proteins, thus they are an ideal tool for the study of membrane-bound proteins. The large size of the cells, combined with

the relatively short time needed for the expression of the foreign plasma membrane-bound proteins (3-4 days) provides an excellent experimental system for the application of isotope exchange techniques. For expression in Sf9 insect cells, the Invitrogen baculovirus Sf9 insect cell system is used. Expression vector constructs (pBluBac4.5, 5 Invitrogen) encoding full-length AtNHX exchanger proteins are prepared for each AtNHX and other PNHX isoforms using a PCR-based subcloning approach similar to that described above for the generation of GST-fusion proteins. Initially, the suitability of the insect cell expression system for uptake analysis is performed using a single AtNHX isoform. The other PNHX isoforms are studied in a similar manner. Cultures of Sf9 10 insect cells are infected with baculovirus containing expression vector constructs encoding the different PNHX isoforms. Infection and selection of transformants are performed as per manufacturer's instructions (Invitrogen). The isoform-specific antibodies described above aid in the assessment of recombinant protein expression and localization within the insect cells.

15 Equally important is the use of transgenic yeast as a tool for the expression of recombinant eukaryotic proteins, particularly because of post-translational modifications and targeting to endomembranes. In addition, functional complementation of yeast mutant strains with plant proteins is often possible. We have subcloned the AtNHX1 cDNA into a yeast expression vector (pYES2) using a PCR-based approach as 20 described above. Yeast (strain w303a) have been transformed with this construct and expression of the recombinant plant protein is confirmed once the antiserum is available. In addition, salt-tolerance of transformed yeast is assessed for each AtNHX isoform by comparing growth rates at different NaCl concentrations. Methods for the isolation of transport-competent plasma membranes and tonoplast and the isolation of 25 intact vacuoles are performed. The kinetics of  $H^+/Na^+$  exchange is measured in intact insect cells and yeast, intact yeast vacuoles, and isolated plasma membranes and tonoplast vesicles according to known methods.  $Na^+$  influx in intact cells is monitored by isotopic exchange using  $[^{22}Na^+]Cl$  and fast-filtration techniques [17,i,ii]. Kinetics of  $H^+$ -dependent  $Na^+$  fluxes in vesicles is monitored by following the pH-dependent 30 fluorescent quench of acridine dyes [13,17].

The results of these kinetic characterization studies provides information about the ion specificity, affinity, and optimal activity conditions for each AtNHX isoform. We assign the activity of each isoform to the corresponding target membrane, and we also determine which of the isoforms have a higher affinity for sodium. We characterize the

mechanisms of salt tolerance in general and tissue-specificity and developmental expression in particular.

In transgenic plants, expression of the different  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiports is verified with western blots using the isoform-specific antibodies described above. The kinetics of  $\text{H}^+/\text{Na}^+$  exchange is measured in intact vacuoles, isolated plasma membranes and tonoplast vesicles (from roots and leaves) as described above.

#### Example 9

##### Identification of positive and negative regulators of $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$ antiport activity.

Heterologous expression of plant transport molecules in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* has been used successfully in recent years in numerous studies. The availability of yeast mutants with salt-sensitive phenotypes (generated by 'knock-outs' of sodium transport molecules such as *Δena1-4* - the plasma membrane  $\text{Na}^+$ -ATPase pumps) makes it an especially suitable system for the study of sodium transport molecules. This heterologous expression facilitates kinetic studies of the antiport activity in yeast cells using radiolabelled  $^{22}\text{Na}^+$ .

Successful suppression of yeast mutants, incapable of sodium detoxification allows for the genetic identification of positive and negative regulators of these  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiports. Mutant yeast cells having a suppressed phenotype as a result of the expression of a plant  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport are transformed with an *Arabidopsis* cDNA library for the purpose of identifying particular regulators of these antiport molecules. A phenotype of increased sodium tolerance in yeast identifies particular positive regulators of the antiport activity while negative regulators are identified by a phenotype of decreased sodium tolerance. These phenotypes depend on the co-expression of the particular cDNAs identified along with that of the  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport under investigation.

Identification of essential amino acid residues regulating the activity of  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger molecules is investigated by random mutagenesis of the antiport molecule which is achieved by PCR using a commercially available low fidelity *Taq* enzyme. The constructs generated are used in transforming sodium-related yeast mutants to identify particular  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  antiport residues that affect suppression of the mutant yeast phenotype. Both gain-of-function and loss-of-function mutations are examined and mapped to the particular mutant residue by sequencing. Gain-of-function mutations are of particular interest since they represent constitutive activation of the antiport activity allowing for increased sodium detoxification.

Example 10

Transformation of Arabidopsis thaliana using overexpression of different putative isoforms and antiports from other plants, preferably salt tolerant plants and evaluation of salt-tolerance.

5           *Arabidopsis* represents a readily transformable model organism with the particular advantage of having a short generation time. *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-mediated genetic transformation is utilized for *Arabidopsis* (ecotype Columbia). Studies include the overexpression of PNHX transgenes in a wild-type background, combined overexpression of more than one PNHX transgene, and suppression of endogenous  
10 PNHX expression using antisense PNHX expression. Stable transformation of progeny is confirmed by Southern blotting. Overexpression of transgenes, or suppression of expression using antisense constructs, is confirmed by Northern and western blotting. In all cases, salt-tolerance of transgenic plants is compared to wild-type plants, and control plants transformed with empty transformation vectors. Separate transformations  
15 are performed on *Arabidopsis* plants using expression vector constructs for each of the different AtNHX isoforms. In addition, *Arabidopsis* plants are transformed with PNHX genes from other plants, preferably salt tolerant plants in order to assess the effect on salt tolerance of the expression of a  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  exchanger in a glycophytic plant.

For overexpression studies, full-length AtNHX1, AtNHX2, AtNHX3 and AtNHX4  
20 cDNAs are subcloned in a sense orientation into the expression vector containing a "superpromoter" [20]. A PCR based subcloning strategy is used for each AtNHX cDNA as described above for the production of NHXGST-fusion constructs. For the production of vector constructs containing PNHX cDNAs in an antisense orientation, oligonucleotides with Sall and SacI restriction sites flanking the C-terminal and N-  
25 terminal PNHX regions respectively, are used for PCR amplification. All plasmid constructs are sequenced on both strands to confirm the fidelity of the PCR amplification before transformation of *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* (strain LBA4404). For each PNHX-pBISN1 construct, approximately 1L of *Agrobacterium* culture, grown under antibiotic selection at 28°C, is used for the transformation of *Arabidopsis*. Plants are ready for  
30 transformation when primary bolts are approximately 15cm. About 2 flats of plants (~ 80 plants per flat) are used per transformation. A highly efficient, vacuum-less infiltration transformation method [iii] is used. Harvested *Agrobacterium* cultures are resuspended in an infiltration media containing a mild surfactant (Silwet L-77, Lehle Seeds), and each pot of *Arabidopsis* is simply submerged in the *Agrobacterium* for 2-6 minutes. Plants  
35 are thereafter drained, and returned to the growth chamber until the seeds are ready for

harvesting (about 4 weeks). Seeds (T1 generation) are collected and after surface sterilization, are plated on sterile, selective media containing kanamycin, vernalized, and then grown under optimal conditions. Healthy seedlings showing kanamycin resistance after about 7 days are transplanted to soil and the presence of the transgene confirmed by Southern blotting. Seeds from T1 transformants (ie T2 generation) are harvested, sown, and T2 plants used for Northern and western blotting to determine the expression patterns of the transgenes and PNHX proteins. Representative transgenic lines (e.g. showing low, medium, or high transgene expression) is used for studies of salt-tolerance. A similar approach is used for transformation of *Arabidopsis* with the PNHXs from other plants.

Salt tolerance is assessed by measuring the growth rate of the plants at increasing salt concentrations. Plant biomass, root/shoot ratios, tissue ion content is measured. Root and hypocotyl growth rates is measured and correlated with tissue water content of plants growing at different NaCl concentrations.

#### 15 Example 11

Transformation of crop plants with *A. thaliana* and/or other exchangers under constitutive and inducible promoters and evaluation of salt-tolerance.

##### a) *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-mediated transformation of crop plants

We assess whether or not homologues of the AtNHX genes exist in the plant of choice. We use degenerate oligonucleotide PCR-primers (as described for other plants) and a cDNA library to isolate the full-length cDNA. The high efficiency *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation method developed specifically for *Brassica* by Moloney et al [iv] is used to introduce and overexpress foreign nucleic acid molecules and/or overexpress the endogenous PNHX nucleic acid molecule in the crop plant(s). This method takes advantage of the fact that cut cotyledonary petioles from, which are capable of undergoing organogenesis (ie generating explants), are very susceptible to *Agrobacterium* infection. Shortly after germination (~ 5 days) cotyledons are excised and imbedded into Murashige-Skoog medium (Gibco) enriched with benzyladenine. Expression vector constructs are prepared using a PCR-based subcloning approach as described above using the pCGN5059 binary plasmid (which employs the CaMV 35S promoter to drive constitutively high expression) engineered for gentamycin resistance [iv] and cDNAs of the various AtNHX clones and/or the halophyte PNHX clones, and the chosen plant PNHX clones. Excised cotyledons are infected with *Agrobacterium* cultures (strain EHA101), containing the vector construct of interest, by brief dipping and

then co-cultivated with the *Agrobacterium* for a 72h. Subsequently, cotyledons are transferred to regeneration medium containing gentamycin as the selective agent. After explant regeneration, and subculturing, on selective media (~ 4 weeks) explants are transferred to rooting medium and then into soil once a root mass has developed.

- 5 Tissue samples are examined from growing plants to confirm transgene presence by Southern blotting as described above for the transformation of *Arabidopsis*. Transformed plants (T1 generation) are allowed to flower and set seed and these seeds are germinated (T2) under selective conditions and transformants used for expression analysis of the transgenes and evaluation of salt-tolerance as described above. Also,
- 10 biochemical analysis of the plants is performed. These include,  $\text{Na}^+/\text{K}^+$  ratios, sugar, amino acid and quaternary N-compounds. Salt-tolerance is also evaluated in fields trials.

b) *Microprojectile bombardment-mediated transformation of crop plants.*

- A microprojectile bombardment-mediated transformation of crop plants is used
- 15 when *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-mediated transformation is not successful. We assess whether or not homologues of the AtNHX genes exist in the plant of choice. We use degenerate oligonucleotide PCR-primers (as described above) and a cDNA library to isolate the full-length cDNA. Expression vector constructs, using the pBAR vector for high level expression of AtNHX or the halophyte PNHX or the endogenous PNHX from
- 20 the plant of choice, are used in conjunction with the microprojectile bombardment system as described by Tomes et al. [v]. Bombardment procedures is carried out in callus tissue. Plant calli are initiated by culturing immature embryos on Callus medium [vi]. After about 2 weeks, friable calli that are growing rapidly are subcultured and grown for an additional 2 weeks and then used for transformation. Calli for transformation are
- 25 transferred to fresh medium, incubated for 24 h and bombarded with tungsten microprojectiles carrying the pBARNHX vector construct. Bombardment conditions is performed according to manufacturer's instructions. Calli that show visible growth 10 days after bombardment are transferred to selective media (containing either Bialaphos or Ignite) in order to identify putative transformants. The growth of transformed plant
- 30 calli on this selective media is continued for 3-4 months. Each putative stable transgenic event becomes apparent as a mass of friable embryogenic callus growing in the presence of the selection agent. Stable transformation is verified by Southern blots. Selected calli are transferred onto a regeneration medium [v], kept in the dark at 28°C for 7 days and then transferred to growth chambers under a 16-h photoperiod until
- 35 green shoots appear. Plantlets (1-2 cm long) are transferred to individual tubes

containing germination medium to allow continued development. At the three to four leaf stage, plants are transferred to soil and into the greenhouse. At the eight-leaf stage, these plants are sprayed with 1% (w/v) Ignite herbicide to detect the presence of the BAR gene. This herbicide kills those plants not carrying the BAR gene. Confirmed transgenic plants (T1) are allowed to mature, flower, set seed, and seeds used for the production of T2 plants. Transgenic T2 plants are used for the evaluation of salt-tolerance as described above. Transgenic T2 and T3 plants are used in field trials for the evaluation of salt tolerance.

## METHODS

### 10 Cloning of the Arabidopsis $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$ antiport cDNA (AtNHX1)

The full-length cDNA of AtNHX1 was cloned by us from an *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Columbia) seedling cDNA library [38]. The library was initially screened with an EST (GenBank # T75860; Figure 8(h)) obtained from the Arabidopsis Biological Resource Center (ABRC) that showed homology to Arabidopsis genomic sequence (A-  
 15 TM021B04.4). The invention includes nucleic acid molecules of between about: 500-1000, 1000-1500 1500-1600, 1600-1700, 1700-2000 or 2000-2500 or greater than 2500 nucleotides including the EST sequence (or a sequence having at least about: 35, 35, 55, 65, 75, 85, 90, 95, 99, 99.5 sequence identity to the EST sequence or the polypeptide encoded by the EST sequence) and which encodes a polypeptide that  
 20 extrudes monovalent (preferably potassium ions or lithium ions, most preferably sodium ions) out of the cytosol for preparation of transgenic plants and host cells, and in the other methods of the invention described below. These sequences are useful in the methods of the invention described above (for example as a probe, research uses, hybridization). The Arabidopsis genomic sequence predicted a polypeptide of 457  
 25 amino acids. Plaques that hybridized with the labeled EST probe were subjected to a secondary screen using the PCR product from the nested amplification of a region coding for the N-terminal portion of the predicted polypeptide. The forward primer, based on the predicted start codon of the polypeptide (Primer-NT), 5'-GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCTG-3 and the reverse primer, based on the stop  
 30 codon predicted from the EST (Primer-CT), 5'-CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3', were used to amplify a 1.7 kb product from the seedling library. This product was purified by agarose gel electrophoresis and used as the template for a second amplification using primer-NT and a reverse primer (primer-C) based on the genomic sequence, 5'-  
 35 CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3'. The resulting 900 bp fragment served

as the template for the probe used in the secondary screen. The pure plaques obtained in the secondary screen were tested by PCR using the primer-NT, primer-CT combination. Three of the plaques, from which a 1.7 kb product was amplified, were selected for excision of the phagemid. Single colonies containing the excised phagemid were grown in liquid culture. Aliquots of each of these cultures were used as templates for the PCR amplification of the region bound by the library plasmid to the 5' side of the clone (T3 promoter) and the reverse primer C. In one clone, a 1.2 kb fragment was amplified, which implied that the clone had an upstream untranslated region of approximately 300 bp. This clone was selected for complete sequencing.

#### 10 Cloning of the *Arabidopsis* AtNHX2 Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> antiport cDNA

The full-length AtNHX2 cDNA was cloned from an *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Columbia) seedling cDNA library. PCR primers were designed for the amplification of the AtNHX2 sequence based on a BAC DNA sequence (MTE17) with a predicted amino acid sequence showing homology to AtNHX1. The forward primer (X6F), 5'-CCTCAGGTGATACCAATCTCA-3' and the reverse primer (X6REV), 5'-GATCCAATGTAACACCGGAG-3' were used to amplify a 1.2 kb product from the seedling library by PCR. This product was purified by agarose gel electrophoresis and used as a probe in hybridization screening of the seedling cDNA library. Plaques that hybridized with the labeled probe were subjected to a secondary screen using the 1.2 kb PCR product as a probe. Pure plaques obtained in the secondary screen were tested by PCR using primer - X6F, primer - X6REV combination. Only one of the plaques had the 1.2 kb product amplified from it. This plaque was used for excision of the phagemid. This clone was used for complete sequencing.

#### Cloning of the *Arabidopsis* AtNHX3 and AtNHX4 Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> antiport cDNAs

25 Full length AtNHX3 and AtNHX4 cDNAs were cloned by us from an *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Columbia) seedling cDNA libraries (CD4-15 and CD4-16; *Arabidopsis* Stock Center, Columbus, Ohio). PCR primers were designed for the amplification of a genomic sequence based on a BAC DNA sequence (F20D21) with a predicted amino acid sequence showing homology to both AtNHX1 and AtNHX2. The forward primer (NHX7F), 5'-TTCGTTCTCGGCCATGTCC-3' and the reverse primer (NHX7REV), 5'-CGGAGAGACCAACACCTTCTGC-3' were used to amplify a 2.2 kb product using *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Columbia) genomic DNA as a template. This product was purified by agarose gel electrophoresis and used as a probe in hybridization screening of the seedling cDNA libraries. Plaques that hybridized with the labeled probe were subjected to a secondary screen using the 2.2 kb PCR product as a probe. Pure plaques were



used as templates for the PCR amplification of the region bound by the library plasmid using the T3 and T7 promoter sequences as primers. Two independent clones (insert sizes of 1.7 kb and 2.1kb) were selected for phagemid excision and complete sequencing.

5    Southern Blot Analysis

Genomic DNA was isolated from mature leaf tissue of *Arabidopsis thaliana* (Columbia). 10 ug of this genomic DNA was digested with ClaI, EcoR1, XbaI, or HindIII, fractionated on 0.7% agarose gel, and transferred to Hybond N<sup>+</sup> membrane (Amersham) according to manufacturers instructions. Overnight hybridization was performed at 65°C in Amersham hybridization buffer with AtNHX1 cDNA fragments labeled with <sup>32</sup>P by the random priming method. The final wash was in 0.1X SSPE, 0.1% SDS at 65°C. Hybridization signals were detected by autoradiography on BioMax hyperfilm (Kodak).

10    Northern Blot Analysis

*Arabidopsis thaliana* ecotype Columbia was grown either on vertical plates on medium containing 0.5X MS salts and 1% agar at 20-25°C under continuous fluorescent light for 1.5 weeks or in soil at 20-25°C under fluorescent light and incandescent light with a 14 hour photo period for 3-4 weeks. Total RNA was isolated from flower, leaf, and inflorescence stems of the mature plants and from root and shoot tissues of the vertically grown seedlings using TRIZOL reagent (GibcoBRL). 40 ug of RNA was electrophoresed and transferred to Hybond N<sup>+</sup> membrane (Amersham) according to manufacturers instructions. Methylene blue was used to visualize the 26S and 18S ribosomal RNA for quantitation. The blotted RNA was hybridized and washed as described for the southern blot analysis.

The present invention has been described in terms of particular embodiments found or proposed by the present inventor to comprise preferred modes for the practice of the invention. It will be appreciated by those of skill in the art that, in light of the present disclosure, numerous modifications and changes can be made in the particular embodiments exemplified without departing from the intended scope of the invention. All such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of the appended claims.

30    Generation of Transgenic Arabidopsis Plants Overexpressing AtNHX1

An AtNHX1 PCR product was amplified using Vent DNA polymerase (New England Biolabs) with the following primers (SE-ATX1-Sall 5'-CGCGTCGACATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTGCG-3' and ATXCT2 5'-

CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3'). This product was digested with Sall gel purified and used in a ligation reaction along with pBISNI previously digested with Sall and SmaI and gel purified. The resulting vector pBISNI-AtNHX1 contained the AtNHX1 open reading frame in a sense orientation under the control of the super promoter.

- 5 Overexpression constructs carrying the AtNHX1 cDNA are introduced into an electro-competent *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* (LBA4404) by electroporation. The *Agrobacteria* are plated on LB plates containing 50 mg/L kanamycin and grown for ~2 days at 30 °C to select for bacteria carrying the overexpression constructs. One liter liquid LB+kanamycin (50mg/L) is inoculated with a single *Agrobacterium* colony selected
- 10 from the LB (kanamycin 50mg/L) plates. The culture is grown to a minimum of OD=1 (600nm) for 2-3 days. The *Agrobacteria* are then pelleted and resuspended in 1L infiltration medium (IM - 0.5XMS salts; 0.5 g/L MES; 5% sucrose; 0.03% Silwet L-77). Flowering *Arabidopsis* plants with primary bolts reaching ~15cm are used for the transformation procedure (T1). Pots of *Arabidopsis* plants are dunked into the IM
- 15 solution containing the *Agrobacteria* and left submerged for 2-6 minutes. The same procedure can be repeated after 8-12 days on the same plants. Plants are allowed to senesce, the plants are dried thoroughly and the seeds harvested. Seeds are plated on agar plates containing 25 mg/L kanamycin in a medium containing MS salts, 0.8% (w/v) agar adjusted to pH 6.0 with KOH. The plates are transferred to a growth room at 25 °C
- 20 under continuous light. After 10 days the kanamycin-resistant seedlings (T2) are transferred to small pots containing vermiculite. At senescence (~8 weeks) the seeds are collected from single plants and plated on agar plates containing MS salts and 25mg/L kanamycin. After 10 days the kanamycin-resistant seedlings (T3) are transferred to small pots containing vermiculite. Seeds produced by these plants are
- 25 germinated and used to assess salt tolerance of the transgenic plants.

#### Assessment of Salt Tolerance in Transgenic Plants

This procedure is described in the legend for Figure 7.

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- 30 The present invention has been described in detail and with particular reference to the preferred embodiments; however, it will be understood by one having ordinary skill in the art that changes can be made thereto without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

All articles, patents and other documents described in this application (including Genbank sequences and/or accession numbers), US application no. 60/078,474 (filed

March 18, 1998), US application no. 60/116,111 (filed January 15, 1998) and US patent nos. 5,612,191, 5,763,211, 5,750,848 and 5,681,714, are incorporated by reference in their entirety to the same extent as if each individual publication, patent or document was specifically and individually indicated to be incorporated by reference in its entirety.

- 5 They are also incorporated to the extent that they supplement, explain, provide a background for, or teach methodology, techniques and/or compositions employed herein.

Table 4

High stringency ( very similar sequences)	
Hybridization	Wash
55 – 65 °C	60 – 65 °C
5xSSC	0.1xSSC
2% SDS	0.1% SDS
100 µg/ml SSDNA	

Intermediate stringency (similar sequences) (moderate stringency)	
Hybridization	Wash
40 – 50 °C	50 – 50 °C
5xSSC	0.1xSSC
2% SDS	0.1% SDS
100 µg/ml SSDNA	

Low stringency ( low similarity among sequences, i.e. many sequences similar)	
Hybridization	Wash
30 – 40 °C	40 – 50 °C
5xSSC	2xSSC
2% SDS	0.2% SDS
100 µg/ml SSDNA	

**Abbreviations:**

SSC = sodium chloride-sodium citrate buffer

SSDNA = single stranded DNA

Table 5 - List of Plants

Alfalfa	Melon
Almond	Mustard
Apple	Oak
Apricot	Oat
Arabidopsis	Olive
Artichoke	Onion
Atriplex	Orange
Avocado	Pea
Barley	Peach
Beet	Pear
Birch	Pepper
Brassica	Pine
Cabbage	Plum
Cacao	Poplar
Cantaloup/cantalope	Potato
Carnations	Prune
Castorbean	Radish
Cauliflower	Rape
Celery	Rice
Clover	Roses
Coffee	Rye
Corn	Sorghum
Cotton	Soybean
Cucumber	Spinach
Garlic	Squash
Grape	Strawberries
Grapefruit	Sunflower
Hemp	Sweet corn
Hops	Tobacco
Lettuce	Tomato
Maple	Wheat

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**We claim:**

1. An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a PNHX transporter polypeptide, or a  
5 fragment of a polypeptide having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
2. An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a TNHX transporter polypeptide, PNHX transporter polypeptide, or a fragment of a polypeptide having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell, comprising  
10 a nucleic acid molecule selected from the group consisting of:
  - (a) a nucleic acid molecule that hybridizes to all or part of a nucleic acid molecule shown in [SEQ ID NO:1], [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:17], [SEQ ID NO:19], or a complement thereof under moderate or high stringency hybridization conditions, wherein the nucleic acid molecule  
15 encodes a TNHX transporter polypeptide, a PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell;
  - (b) a nucleic acid molecule degenerate with respect to (a), wherein the nucleic molecule encodes a TNHX transporter polypeptide, a PNHX  
20 transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
3. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 2, wherein the hybridization conditions comprise moderate or high stringency conditions selected from conditions about those in Table 4.
- 25 4. An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a TNHX transporter polypeptide or a PNHX transporter polypeptide, or a fragment of a polypeptide having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerances in a cell, comprising a nucleic acid molecule selected from the group consisting of:
  - (a) the nucleic acid molecule of the coding strand shown in [SEQ ID NO:1],  
30 [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:17], [SEQ ID NO:19] or a complement thereof;
  - (b) a nucleic acid molecule encoding the same amino acid sequence as a nucleotide sequence of (a); and

- (c) a nucleic acid molecule having at least 17% identity with the nucleotide sequence of (a) and which encodes a TNHx transporter polypeptide or the PNHX transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity.
- 5 5. The nucleic acid molecule of any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the TNHx transporter polypeptide or the PNHX transporter polypeptide comprises an AtNHx transporter polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
- 10 6. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, comprising all or part of a nucleotide sequence shown in [SEQ ID NO:1], [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:17], [SEQ ID NO:19], or a complement thereof.
7. An AtNHx nucleic acid molecule isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*, or a fragment thereof encoding a transporter polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
- 15 8. A recombinant nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleic acid molecule of any of claims 1 to 4 and a constitutive promoter sequence or an inducible promoter sequence, operatively linked so that the promoter enhances transcription of the nucleic acid molecule in a host cell.
- 20 9. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 6, wherein the molecule comprises genomic DNA, cDNA or RNA.
10. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 6, wherein the nucleic acid molecule is chemically synthesized.
11. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 6, wherein the nucleic acid molecule is isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.
- 25 12. The nucleic acid molecule of any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the TNHx transporter polypeptide or the PNHX transporter polypeptide is capable of extruding monovalent cations out of the cytosol of a cell to provide the cell with increased salt tolerance, wherein the monovalent cations are selected from at least one of the group consisting of sodium, lithium and potassium.
- 30 13. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 12, wherein the cell comprises a plant cell.
14. The nucleic acid molecule of claim 13, wherein the monovalent cations are extruded into a vacuole or into the extracellular space.



15. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleic acid molecule selected from the group consisting of 8 to 10 nucleotides of the nucleic acid molecule of claim 6, 11 to 25 nucleotides of the nucleic acid molecule of claim 6 and 26 to 50 nucleotides of the nucleic acid molecule of claim 6.
- 5 16. An isolated oligonucleotide comprising at least about 10 nucleotides from a sequence selected from the group consisting of 5'-GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCG-3 [SEQ ID NO:11], 5'-CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3' [SEQ ID NO:12], 5'-CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3' [SEQ ID NO:13], 5'-10 GCCATGTTGGATTCTCTAGTGTCG-3 [SEQ ID NO:14], 5'-CCGAATTCTCAAAGCTTTTCTTCCACG-3' [SEQ ID NO:15] and 5'-CGGAATTCACAGAAAAACACAGTGAGGAT-3' [SEQ ID NO:16].
17. A vector comprising the nucleic acid molecule of any of claims 1 to 4.
18. The vector of claim 17, comprising a promoter selected from the group  
15 consisting of a super promoter, a 35S promoter of cauliflower mosaic virus, a drought-inducible promoter, an ABA-inducible promoter, a heat shock-inducible promoter, a salt-inducible promoter, a copper-inducible promoter, a steroid-inducible promoter and a tissue-specific promoter.
19. A host cell comprising the recombinant nucleic acid molecule of claim 8 or the  
20 vector of claim 17, or progeny of the host cell.
20. The host cell of claim 19, selected from the group consisting of a fungal cell, a yeast cell, a bacterial cell, a microorganism cell and a plant cell.
21. A plant, a plant part, a seed, a plant cell or progeny thereof comprising the recombinant nucleic acid molecule of claim 8 or the vector of claim 17.
- 25 22. The plant part of claim 21, comprising all or part of a leaf, a flower, a stem, a root or a tuber.
23. The plant, plant part, seed or plant cell of claim 21, wherein the plant, plant part, seed or plant cell is of a species selected from the group consisting of potato, tomato, brassica, cotton, sunflower, strawberries, spinach, lettuce, rice, soybean,  
30 corn, wheat, rye, barley, atriplex, sorghum, alfalfa, salicornia and the plants in Table 5.
24. The plant, plant part, seed or plant cell of claim 21, wherein the plant comprises a dicot plant.

25. The plant, plant part, seed or plant cell of claim 21, wherein the plant comprises a monocot plant.
26. A method for producing a recombinant host cell capable of expressing the nucleic acid molecule of any of claims 1 to 4, the method comprising introducing  
5 into the host cell a vector of claim 17.
27. A method of producing a genetically transformed plant which expresses TNHx or PNHX transporter polypeptide, comprising regenerating a genetically transformed plant from the plant cell, seed or plant part of claim 21.
28. The method of claim 27, wherein the genome of the host cell also includes a  
10 functional TNHx or PNHX gene.
29. The method of claim 27, wherein the genome of the host cell does not include a functional TNHx or PNHX gene.
30. A transgenic plant produced according to the method of claim 27.
31. A method for expressing a TNHx or PNHX transporter polypeptide in the host  
15 cell of claim 19, or the plant, plant part, seed or plant cell of claim 21, the method comprising culturing the host cell under conditions suitable for gene expression.
32. A method for producing a transgenic plant that expresses elevated levels of PNHX transporter polypeptide relative to a non-transgenic plant, comprising transforming a plant with the vector of claim 17.
- 20 33. An isolated polypeptide encoded by and/or produced from the nucleic acid molecule of any of claims 1 to 4, or the vector of claim 17.
34. An isolated PNHX transporter polypeptide or a fragment thereof having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
35. The polypeptide of claim 34 comprising an AtNHX transporter polypeptide.
- 25 36. The polypeptide of claim 35 comprising all or part of an amino acid sequence in [SEQ ID NO:2], [SEQ ID NO:4], [SEQ ID NO:18] or [SEQ ID NO:20].
37. A polypeptide fragment of the AtNHX transporter polypeptide of claim 35, or a peptide mimetic of the AtNHX transporter polypeptide, having  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
- 30 38. The polypeptide fragment of claim 37, consisting of at least 20 amino acids, which fragment has  $\text{Na}^+/\text{H}^+$  transporter activity and is capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.

39. The fragment or peptide mimetic of claim 36, which is capable of being bound by an antibody to the polypeptide of claim 6.
40. The polypeptide of claim 34 which is recombinantly produced.
41. An isolated and purified transporter polypeptide comprising the amino acid sequence of a TNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide or a PNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide, wherein the transporter polypeptide is encoded by a nucleic acid molecule that hybridizes under moderate or stringent conditions to a nucleic acid molecule in [SEQ ID NO:1], [SEQ ID NO:3], [SEQ ID NO:17], [SEQ ID NO:19], a degenerate form thereof or a complement.
42. A polypeptide comprising a sequence having greater than 28% sequence identity to the polypeptide of claim 36.
43. The polypeptide of claim 35, wherein the polypeptide comprises a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter polypeptide.
44. The polypeptide of claim 43, isolated from *Arabidopsis thaliana*.
45. An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding the polypeptide of claims 34, 35 or 37.
46. An antibody directed against the polypeptide of claim 36.
47. The antibody of claim 46, comprising a monoclonal antibody or a polyclonal antibody.
48. An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a TNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide or a PNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide, or a fragment of a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell, comprising a nucleic acid molecule selected from the group consisting of:
- (a) a nucleic acid molecule that hybridizes to all or part of a nucleic molecule in [SEQ ID NO:5], [SEQ ID NO:7], [SEQ ID NO:9] or to a nucleic acid molecule comprising about nucleotides 1-1487 of [SEQ ID NO:9], or a complement thereof under moderate or high stringency hybridization conditions, wherein the nucleic acid molecule encodes a TNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide, a PNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell;

- (b) a nucleic acid molecule degenerate with respect to (a), wherein the nucleic molecule encodes a TNH<sub>X</sub> polypeptide, a PNH<sub>X</sub> polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
- 5 (c) the nucleic acid molecule of the coding strand shown in [SEQ ID NO:5], [SEQ ID NO:7], [SEQ ID NO:9], nucleotides 1-1487 of [SEQ ID NO:9], or an isolated nucleic acid molecule including about 1614 nucleic acids including [SEQ ID NO:5], [SEQ ID NO:7], nucleotides 1 to 1487 of the nucleic acid molecule in [SEQ ID NO:9] or the complement thereof;
- 10 (d) a nucleic acid molecule encoding the same amino acid sequence as a nucleotide sequence of (c); and
- (e) a nucleic acid molecule having at least 17% sequence identity with the nucleotide sequence of (c) and which encodes a TNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide, a PNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having
- 15 Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
49. A polypeptide produced from the nucleic acid molecule of claim 48.
50. A polypeptide comprising (a) the amino acid sequence in [SEQ ID NO:6], [SEQ ID NO:8], [SEQ ID NO:10]; (b) amino acids 1 to 496 of [SEQ ID NO:10]; and (c)
- 20 a sequence having greater than 28% homology to the polypeptide in (a) or (b).
51. The polypeptide of claim 50, wherein the polypeptide comprises a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter polypeptide capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell.
52. A DNA molecule encoding the polypeptide of claim 50.
53. A method of producing a genetically transformed plant which expresses or
- 25 overexpresses a TNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide, a PNH<sub>X</sub> transporter polypeptide or a polypeptide having Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> transporter activity and capable of increasing salt tolerance in a cell and wherein the plant has increased salt tolerance, comprising:
- (a) cloning or synthesizing a TNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecule, a PNH<sub>X</sub> nucleic acid molecule or a nucleic acid molecule which codes for a Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup>
- 30 transporter polypeptide, wherein the polypeptide is capable of providing salt tolerance to a plant;

- (b) inserting the nucleic acid molecule in a vector so that the nucleic acid molecule is operably linked to a promoter;
  - (c) inserting the vector into a plant cell or plant seed;
  - (d) regenerating the plant from the plant cell or plant seed, wherein salt
- 5 tolerance in the plant is increased compared to a wild type plant.
54. A transgenic plant produced according to the method of claim 53.

cctctctgttttcgttctcgttagacgaagaagaagaagaatctcaggttttagctttcga 60  
agcttccaaaattttgaattttgatcttctgggtctctttgtaaatcagactgaagatat 120  
ttagattaccacagaagttgttcaaggaatgggttcagtgacagcacggaagataaaag 180  
agactttttttccagattttgtgatccaaaatctgaatagttgttcatgttcttggtat 240  
caaactctggaaagaggaagttgttggtatctagaagaagataacaatgttggattctcta 300  
M L D S L  
1 gtgtcgaactgccttcgttatcgacatctgatcacgcttctgtggttgcttgaatctc 360  
6 V S K L P S L S T S D H A S V V A L N L  
tttgttgcaacttctttgtgcttgtattgttcttgggtcatcttttggaagagaatagatgg 420  
26 F V A L L C A C I V L G H L L E E N R W  
atgaacgaatccatcacgccttgttgattgggttaggcactgggtgttaccattttgttg 480  
46 M N E S I T A L L I G L G T G V T I L L  
attagtaaaaggaagagctcgcacatcttctcgtcttttagtgaagatcttttcttcatatat 540  
66 I S K G K S S H L L V F S E D L F F I Y  
cttttgccaccattatattcaatgcaggggtttcaagtaaaaaagaagcagtttttccgc 600  
86 L L P P I I F N A G F Q V K K K Q F F R  
aatttcgtgactattatgctttttgggtgctgttgggactattatttcttgcacaatcata 660  
106 N F V T I M L F G A V G T I I S C T I I  
tctctaggtgtaacacagttctttaaagaagttggacattggaacctttgacttgggtgat 720  
126 S L G V T Q F F K K L D I G T F D L G D  
tatcttgctattgttgccatatttgcgtgaacagattcagtatgtacactgcaggttctg 780  
146 Y L A I G A I F A A T D S V C T L Q V L  
aatcaagacgagacacctttgctttacagtcttgtatttcggagaggggtgttgatgat 840  
166 N Q D E T P L L Y S L V F G E G V V N D  
gcaacgtcagttgtggtcttcaacgcgattcagagctttgatctcactcactaaccac 900  
186 A T S V V V F N A I Q S F D L T H L N H  
gaagctgcttttcatcttcttggaaactcttgtatttgttctcctaagttaccttgctt 960  
206 E A A F H L L G N F L Y L F L L S T L L  
gggtgctgcaaccggtctgataagtgctgatgttatcaagaagctatactttggaaggcac 1020  
226 G A A T G L I S A Y V I K K L Y F G R H  
tcaactgaccgagaggttgcccttatgatgcttatggcgtatctttcttatatgcttgct 1080  
246 S T D R E V A L M M L M A Y L S Y M L A  
gagcttttgcacttgagcgggtatcctcactgtgtttttctgtggtattgtgatgtcccat 1140  
266 E L F D L S G I L T V F F C G I V M S H  
tacacatggcacaatgtaacggagagctcaagaataacaacaagcatacctttgcaact 1200  
286 Y T W H N V T E S S R I T T K H T F A T  
ttgtcatttcttgcggagacatttattttcttgtatgttggaaatggatgccttggacatt 1260  
306 L S F L A E T F I F L Y V G M D A L D I  
gacaagtgagatccgtgagtgacacaccgggaacatcgatcgacagtgagctcaatccta 1320  
326 D K W R S V S D T P G T S I A V S S I L  
atgggtctggtcatggttggaaagagcagcgttcttccgttatcggttctatctaac 1380  
346 M G L V M V G R A A F V F P L S F L S N  
ttagccaagaagaatcaaagcgagaaaatcaactttaacatgcaggttgtgatttgggtgg 1440  
366 L A K K N Q S E K I N F N M Q V V I W W  
tctggtctcatgagaggtgctgtatctatggctcttgcataacaagaagttacaaggcc 1500  
386 S G L M R G A V S M A L A Y N K F T R A  
gggcacacagatgtacgcgggaatgcaatcatgatcacgagtagcagataactgtctgtctt 1560  
406 G H T D V R G N A I M I T S T I T V C L

Figure 1a (continued on next page)

tttagcacagtgggtggttggtatgctgaccaaaccactcataagctacctattaccgcac 1620  
426 F S T V V F G M L T K P L I S Y L L P H  
cagaacgccaccacgagcatgttatctgatgacaacacccccaaaatccatacatatccct 1680  
446 Q N A T T S M L S D D N T P K S I H I P  
ttgttggaccaagactcggttcattgagccttcaggggaaccacaatgtgcctcggcctgac 1740  
466 L L D Q D S F I E P S G N H N V P R P D  
agtatacgtggccttcttgacacggccactcgaaccgtgcattactactggagacaattt 1800  
486 S I R G F L T R P T R T V H Y Y W R Q F  
gatgactccttcctgacgacccgctcttggaggtcgtggctttgtaccctttgttccaggt 1860  
506 D D S F M R P V F G G R G F V P F V P G  
tctccaactgagagaaaccctcctgatcttagtaaggcttgagggtaacgtggaagaaaa 1920  
526 S P T E R N P P D L S K A -  
gctttgatttttttggtagaaaagggtgattcaaattatgcttttgtgtaaattatcca 1980  
tttgtaattattgtttgtgaggacagaaatctgtcctaacgttttgagagcagaaagcaaa 2040  
acatggcaactttgaagtgtttgattgatgtatgtaattatattcatatttgtttgttg 2100  
taacacaaactacacatttgtttatgtttgaatttgggttttgccttcgaaaaaaaaaa 2160  
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa 2178

Figure 1a (continued)

tcttcggtttgcgattggtgttttcaaaatcgacgaaatcgaaaacattatcgagtgaaaa 60  
atgagtatcggattaacagagtttgtgacgaataaactagcagctgagcatcctcagggtg 120  
1 M S I G L T E F V T N K L A A E H P Q V  
ataccaatctcagtggttcacgcgcatctctgtctatgttttagttatcggccacttgctt 180  
21 I P I S V F I A I L C L C L V I G H L L  
gaagagaatcgatgggttaatgaatctattaccgcatcttttagtaggagcagcatcagga 240  
41 E E N R W V N E S I T A I L V G A A S G  
acagtgatcttacttatttagtaaaaggaaaaagttcacatattttgggtgttgatgaagaa 300  
61 T V I L L I S K G K S S H I L V F D E E  
ctcttcttcatcttacttcttcttcttcaataatcttcaatgctgggttccaagtttaagaaa 360  
81 L F F I Y L L P P I I F N A G F Q V K K  
aagaagttttttcacaaacttttaaccatcatgtcctttgggtgtgattggagttttcatc 420  
101 K K F F H N F L T I M S F G V I G V F I  
tccactgtcattatctcgtttgggacttgggtggtgttcccaagttgggatttaagggg 480  
121 S T V I I S F G T W W L F P K L G F K G  
ttgagtgttagagactatcttgcacataggaacgattttctcatcaactgatactgtttgc 540  
141 L S A R D Y L A I G T I F S S T D T V C  
actctacagattctccatcaagatgaaacaccattgctatacagcttagtctttggagaa 600  
161 T L Q I L H Q D E T P L L Y S L V F G E  
ggagtgggtgaatgatgcaacctcagttgtactgttcaacgcccgtgcaaaagattcaattt 660  
181 G V V N D A T S V V L F N A V Q K I Q F  
gaaagcctaaccgggtggacggcgctgcaagattttgggaactttttgtacctcttctca 720  
201 E S L T G W T A L Q V F G N F L Y L F S  
acaagcacacttctcgggaattgggtgggggcttaataacatctttgttctttaaacccttg 780  
221 T S T L L G I G V G L I T S F V L K T L  
tattttggaagacattctactacacgcgaactcgccatcatggttctaatgggttacctt 840  
241 Y F G R H S T T R E L A I M V L M A Y L  
tcatatatgtttggctgagctcttctcattaagtgggaattcttactgttttcttctgtggt 900  
261 S Y M L A E L F S L S G I L T V F F C G  
gttttaatgtcgcattatgcatcatataacgtgacagagagctcaagaatcacttccagg 960  
281 V L M S H Y A S Y N V T E S S R I T S R  
catgtattttgcaatgttgcctttatttgcggagacattcatatttctgtatgttggaaca 1020  
301 H V F A M L S F I A E T F I F L Y V G T  
gatgctcttgattttacaaagtgggaagacaagcagcttaagctttgggggtactctgggt 1080  
321 D A L D F T K W K T S S L S F G G T L G  
gtctccggtgtcataaccgcattagttattgcttggacgagcagcatttgccttccactc 1140  
341 V S G V I T A L V L L G R A A F V F P L  
tcggtcttaacaaatttcatgaacaggcacactgaaagaaacgagcttatcacatttaag 1200  
361 S V L T N F M N R H T E R N E S I T F K  
catcaggtgatcatttgggtgggcaggtctaattgcgaggtgctgtctcaattgctctgggt 1260  
381 H Q V I I W W A G L M R G A V S I A L A  
ttcaagcagttcacatactccggtgttacattggatcctgtgaatgctgccatggtcacc 1320  
401 F K Q F T Y S G V T L D P V N A A M V T  
aacaccactatcgttgtctcttactacactggtctttgggttctcacaaccactt 1380  
421 N T I V V L F T T L V F G F L T K P L  
gtgaattatctccttctcgaagatgcaagtcacaacaccggaaatagaggtaaacgcact 1440  
441 V N Y L L P Q D A S H N T G N R G K R T

Figure 1b (continued on next page)



Figure 1b (continued)

(i)

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2      acaaaagctggagctccaccgcggtggcgggcgctctagaactagtggatcccccgggct 60
      R A
22     gcaggaattcgcgggcgccctcgccatgtccctcgccgcatcgattccactatcttccct 120
      A G I R G R L G H V L R R H R F H Y L P
42     gaagccagcggttcgcttctcattgggttaatcgctcggtatacttgctaataatctccgat 180
      E A S G S L L I G L I V G I L A N I S D
62     actgagactagcattaggacgtgggttaattccacgaagagttcttcttcttgtttttg 240
      T E T S I R T W F N F H E E F F F L F L
82     ttgcctcccatcatattccagtcaggtttcagtccttcaacctaaaccattcttttctaac 300
      L P P I I F Q S G F S L Q P K P F F S N
102    tttggagccattgttaccttttgctatcatcggaacttttgctcgcttcagttgttactggc 360
      F G A I V T F A I I G T F V A S V V T G
122    ggtctggtttatcttgggcggtctctatgtatctcatgtataaacttccctttgttgagtgt 420
      G L V Y L G G S M Y L M Y K L P F V E C
142    cttatgtttggtgcacttatatcagctacggacctgtcactgtactctctatattccag 480
      L M F G A L I S A T D P V T V L S I F Q
162    gatgtgggcaccgatgttaacctgtatgcttttggtctttggagaatcagttctgaatgat 540
      D V G T D V N L Y A L V F G E S V L N D
182    gctatggcaatatcattgtacagaacaatgtcccttagtaaacgccagtcctcgtctggg 600
      A M A I S L Y R T M S L V N R Q S S S G
202    gaacatttttcatgggtggtgatcagyttttttgagactttgctgggtcaatgtcgaggg 660
      E H F S
      gttgggggttgattcacttcagcttaatatcctcctcgatcctcctatttcccta 720

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(ii)

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3      ggacttcgagggccatggcattttgcacttgcaacttcaatacttcatgatctaccagaggt 60
      T R G
23     caccggcccaatcatcttttactgcaccacaactattgttgttgtcacgggttttactaata 120
      H G P I I F Y C T T T I V V V T V L L I
43     ggaggttcgacaggtaaaatggttgaagctttggaagttgtaggtgacgatcttgatgac 180
      G G S T G K M L E A L E V V G D D L D
63     tccatgtctgaaggctttgaagagagcgatcatcagtatgtccctcctccttttagcatt 240
      S M S E G F E E S D H Q Y V P P P F S I
83     ggagcttcatctgacgaggtatacatcatcaggaagcaggttcaagatgaagctgaag 300
      G A S S D E D T S S S G S R F K M K L K
103    gaggtttcacaaaaccactacatcattcaccgcggttgacaaaactttctgactccggtc 360
      E F H K T T T S F T A L D K N F L T P F
123    ttcacaactaatagtggagatggagatggagatggggagtagcatggaaaagatgtgtat 420
      F T T N S G D G D G D

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Figure 1(c)

cgccacgaccctcagggccaggttaagcagcagcaagcggccggcggttggtatactgctt 60  
cagattatgatgctcggtgctttccttcgttctcgccatgtcctccgccgtcatcgattc 120  
1 M M L V L S F V L G H V L R R H R F 180  
cactatcttctgaagccagcgggttcgcttctcattgggttaatcggtcggtatacttgct  
18 H Y L P E A S G S L L I G L I V G I L A 240  
aatatctccgatactgagactagcattaggacgtgggttaatttccacgaagagttcttc  
38 N I S D T E T S I R T W F N F H E E F F 300  
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58 F L F L L P P I I F Q S G F S L Q P K P 360  
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78 F F S N F G A I V T F A I I G T F V A S 420  
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98 V V T G L V Y L G G S M Y L M Y K L P 480  
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118 F V E C L M F G A L I S A T D P V T V L 540  
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138 S I F Q D V G T D V N L Y A L V F G E S 600  
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158 V L N D A M A I S L Y R T M S L V N R Q 660  
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178 S S S G E H F F M V V I R F F E T F A G 720  
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198 S M S A G V G V G F T S A L L F K Y A G 780  
ttggacaccgagaatcttcagaacttggtggttggttggttggttggttggttggttggttggt  
218 L D T E N L Q N L E C C L F V L F P Y F 840  
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238 S Y M L A E G V G L S G I V S I L F T G 900  
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258 I V M K R Y T F S N L S E A S Q S F V S 960  
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278 S F F H L I S S L A E T F T F I Y M G F 1020  
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298 D I A M E Q H S W S H V G F I L F S I V 1080  
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318 S S F T D R Q \* 1140  
tatttggtcaacctatttagacaggagaaccagaagatacctatgaagcaccaaaaagcc 1200  
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tggaagatgtgtatttggtggtccaggccaagctataaattagagtacacatatgtctat 1680  
gtaagattaacactggttgattttacctctcgcaaatgccactataaagttgacgatt 1683  
tcc

Figure 1d

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 2 M M  
 3 ctcgtgcttttcttcgttctcggccatgtcctccgccgtcatcgattccactatcttcct 120  
 4 L V L S F V L G H V L R R H R F H Y L P  
 5 gaagccagcggttcgcttctcattgggttaatcgctcggtatacttgctaataatctccgat 180  
 6 E A S G S L L I G L I V G I L A N I S D  
 7 actgagactagcattaggacgtgggttaattccacgaagagttcttcttctgttttg 240  
 8 T E T S I R T W F N F H E E F F F L F L  
 9 ttgcctcccatcatattccagtcagggtttcagttcttcaacctaaaccattcttttctaac 300  
 10 L P P I I F Q S G F S L Q P K P F F S N  
 11 ttggagccattgttacctttgctatcatcggaacttttgctcgcttcagttgttactgg 360  
 12 F G A I V T F A I I G T F V A S V V T G  
 13 ggtctggtttatcttgccggtctatgtatctcatgtataaacttccctttgttgagtgt 420  
 14 G L V Y L G G S M Y L M Y K L P F V E C  
 15 cttatgtttggtgcacttatatcagctacggaccctgtcactgtactctctatattccag 480  
 16 L M F G A L I S A T D P V T V L S I F Q  
 17 gatgtgggcaccgatgttaacctgtatgctttggtctttggagaatcagttctgaatgat 540  
 18 D V G T D V N L Y A L V F G E S V L N D  
 19 gctatggcaatatcattgtacagaacaatgtccttagtaaacccgagtcctcgctctggg 600  
 20 A M A I S L Y R T M S L V N R Q S S S G  
 21 gaacattttttcattggtggtgatcagggttttttgagacttttgctggtcgaatgtctgca 660  
 22 E H F F M V V I R F F E T F A G S M S A  
 23 ggggttgggtttggttaccattcagcttttaatatcttctcgaatcctctatttttctt 720  
 24 G V G V G F T S A L I S F L E S S I F L  
 25 attagatgtcacatggccaaaaatgtattgtaaaatcttaactcagaacacctctttaag 780  
 26 I R C H M A K N V L \*  
 27 tatgcaggattggacaccgagaatcttcagaacttgagtggtgtctctttgtacttttc 840  
 28 ccgtatttttctgaagtagacaaaactctcctcctgtctcttctgatttatgacaac 900  
 29 acttcttccccctaattgtattctggttattctgtaagatacatgcttgacagaaggtgttg 960  
 30 gtctctccggcattgtttctatactcttcacaggaattgtaatcgccgagtcattgttagc 1020  
 31 ttttacatcttagttgatgttaatatcttggaagacatatattaggctgcctaataatagt 1080  
 32 gctactgtaggttatgaagcgctacactttctcaaatctctcagaagcttcacagagttt 1140  
 33 cgtatcttcttttttcttctgatatcttcgctagcagaaaactttcacgttcatttacat 1200  
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 38 attcggattttacctatatgttctgcaatgctttctcagcgagggtgtcaatgtatttg 1500  
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 40 aaaaagcccttttggtatagtggacttcgaggggcaatggcatttgcaacttgcaacttcaat 1620  
 41 cacttcatgatctaccagaggggtcacggccaaatcatctttactgcaaccacaactattg 1680  
 42 ttggtgtcacgggttttactaataggaggttcgacagggtaaaatgttggaagctttggaag 1740  
 43 ttgtaggtgacgatcttgatgactccatgtctgaaggctttggaagagagcgatcatcagt 1800  
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 45 gcaggttcaagatgaagctgaaggagtttcacaaaaccactacatcattcaccgcttggt 1920  
 46 acaaaaactttctgactccgttcttcacaactaatagtgagatggagatggagatgggg 1980  
 47 agtagcatggaaaagatgtgtattttgtggtccaggccaagctataattagagtacacata 2040  
 48 tgtctatgtaagattaacactgggttgattttacctctcgcaaaatgccactataaagtt 2100  
 49 gacgatttccaagacatttcga 2122

Figure 1e

AtNHX1	-----	-----	-----MLDSI	VSKLPSLSSTS	DHA-----
ScNHX1	MLSKVLLNIA	FKVLLTT---	AKRAVDPDDD	DELLPSPDLP	GSDDPIAG--
HsNHE6	MARRGWRRAP	LRRGVGSSPR	ARRLMRPLWT	LLAVGVFDWA	GASDGGGGEA
CeNHE1	-----	-----	-----MKVESI	FFMSQTFDVI	TKN-----
AtNHX1	----SVVALN	-----	-----EFVAL	LCACIVLGHL	LEENR--WEN
ScNHX1	---DPDVDLN	PVTEEMFS--	SWALFIMLIL	LISALWSSYY	LTQKRIRAY
HsNHE6	RAMDEETVSE	KQAEESHROD	SANLLIFTLL	LTLTILTITWL	FKHRRARFHE
CeNHE1	----KTIVKE	PPD-----	-----YLM	LEVKPE----	-----G
AtNHX1	ESITALLIGL	GTGVTTILLIS	-KGKSS----	-----	--HLLVFESEI
ScNHX1	ETVLSIFYGM	VIGLIERMSP	GHYIQDTV--	-----	-----TFSS
HsNHE6	ETGLMIYGL	LVGLVIRYGI	-HVPDSDVNV	TLSCEVQSSP	TTLVLTDPPE
CeNHE1	GRVVFHYEL	TEGFFADKRK	-KIEQQIEQK	S-----	-----VFSPPE
AtNHX1	FFFIYLLPPI	IFNAGEOVKK	KOFFRNFVTI	MLEGAVGTII	SCITISLGTIT
ScNHX1	YFFNVLLPPI	ILNSGYELNO	VFFENNMLSI	LIEAIPGTET	SAVVIGITIT
HsNHE6	VFFNILLPPI	IFYAGYSLKR	REFFRNEGSI	LAYAFICTAI	SCFVIGSITIT
CeNHE1	VFFNMLPPI	IFNAGYSLKK	REFFRNICSI	LAIVFICTTI	SCFGTGCITIT
AtNHX1	QFFKKLDIG-	----TEDLGD	YLAIGATFAA	TDSVCTLOVL	NODETPL-LY
ScNHX1	ITFTLGLES-	---IDISEAD	AMSVGATISA	TDPVTILSTF	NAYKVDPKLY
HsNHE6	GCVTLMKVTG	QLAGDEYFTD	CLLFGATISA	TDPVTVLATF	HELOVDVELY
CeNHE1	VETSIFOMG-	-----YSEKE	LLFFGATISA	TDPVTETSTF	NOMNVEADLY
AtNHX1	SLVFGEGVYN	DATSVVFVNA	IQSEDLT---	--HLNHEAAF	HLICNFLYTF
ScNHX1	TFEGESILIN	DAISTVMFET	CQKEHGQ---	--PATFSSVF	EGAGLFLMTF
HsNHE6	ALLFGESVLN	DAVAIVSSSS	IVAYQPADGN	SHTFDVTAME	KSTGIFLGTF
CeNHE1	ALIFGESALN	DAVAIVESEV	IEINFSTS---	SEAITLQDFG	SATAGEAGTF
AtNHX1	LLSTLLCAAT	GLISAYVIRK	LYFGRHSTDR	EVAIMMLNAY	LSYMDAELFD
ScNHX1	SVSLILGVLI	GILVALLIKH	THIR-RYPQI	ESCHILILAY	ESYFFENGCH
HsNHE6	SGSFAMCAAT	GVVTALVTKF	TKLR-EFQLI	ETGLFFELMS	STETAEAWG
CeNHE1	FGSLMLGEMI	CCMNAFLTKM	TLIS-EHALI	ESSLEVLISY	ISELYAEVCG
AtNHX1	FGIILVFC	GIVMSHYTW	NVDESSRITT	KITEATLSFI	AEFFIFLYAG
ScNHX1	FGIVSVLFC	GITLKHVAYY	NYSRRSQITI	KMIFQELARE	SENFIFIYAG
HsNHE6	FGIVSVLFC	GITORHYTYK	NISTESQHRT	KOLEEILNFI	AENFIFSYAG
CeNHE1	FGIVSVLFC	GIAQAHYTYN	NESDESQSNT	KHEEHMYSFI	MESFIFCYAG
AtNHX1	MDALDIDKWR	SVSDTPGTSI	AVSSILMGLV	MIGRAAFVVP	LSFLSNBAFI
ScNHX1	IE-----E	ETEVELVEKP	LLLEVAATSI	CMARWCAMP	LSQFYNWIYR
HsNHE6	IT-----E	ETFQNHVENP	TFVYCAFVAI	FTGRAANAMP	LSLLINIGAR
CeNHE1	VS-----V	EVTNNQRWSF	SFFLFSLTIS	TASRALEVVP	LSWLINIRAR
AtNHX1	NO-----	-----SEK	INENMOVVTV	WGLMRGAVS	MALAYNKFTR
ScNHX1	VKTIRMSGI	TGENISVPDE	IPYNYQMTF	WAGL-RGAVG	VALA-----
HsNHE6	SK-----	-----	IGSNEQHMM	EAGL-RGAMA	FALA-----
CeNHE1	PK-----	-----	IPKRYQHML	EAGL-RGAMA	FALA-----

Figure 2a (continued on next page)

AtNHX1	AGHIDVVRGNA	IMITSHITVC	LFSTVVFGL	TKPLISYLLP	HQNATTSMLS
ScNHX1	LGIQGEY-KF	TLATVVLVV	VLTVIIFGGT	TAGMLEVLNI	KTCCISEEDT
HsNHE6	IRDITATYARQ	MMFSTLLTV	FETVWVFGGG	TTAMLSCLHI	RVCVDSDESH
CeNHE1	GRNTSTENRQ	MIFATTAVV	IVTVLVNGGL	TSWMIDYLOI	KHCKDAIEEG
AtNHX1	D---DNTPKS	IHIP-----	-----LLDQ	DSFIEPSG--	-----
ScNHX1	S---EDEFD	IEAP-----	--RAINLLNG	SSIQTDLG--	-----P
HsNHE6	LGVPENERRT	TKAESAWLFR	MWYNFDHNYL	KPILTHSGPP	LTTLTPACCG
CeNHE1	Q-RLENSMSS	SPAD-----	--QHSDIDES	VPVTMSPG--	-----LN
AtNHX1	-NHNVPRPDS	IRGELTRPTR	TVHYWRQFD	DSEMRPVEGG	RGEVBFVPGS
ScNHX1	YSDNNSPDIS	IDQFAVSSNK	NLPNNISTTG	GNTFGGLNET	ENTSENPARS
HsNHE6	PIARCLTSPQ	AYENQEQLKD	DDSDLILNDG	DISLTYGDST	VNTEPATSSA
CeNHE1	PWDKAFLPRK	WYHEDARWOL	LK--LVFQFH	ETSTDPCDAI	FGINTPTVLS
AtNHX1	PTERNPPDLS	KA-----	-----	-----	-----
ScNHX1	SMDKRNLROK	LGTIFNSDSQ	WFQNFDEQVL	KPVFLDNVSP	SLQDSATQSP
HsNHE6	PRRFMGNSSE	DALDRELAFG	DHELVIRGTR	LVLPMDDSEP	PLNLLDNTRH
CeNHE1	SIDFLVDFKP	STRVRQCRAL	QYNCTIRDSI	D-----	-----
AtNHX1	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
ScNHX1	ADFSSQNH	-----	-----	-----	-----
HsNHE6	GPA-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
CeNHE1	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Figure 2a (continued)

AtNHX1	MLDSLVSKLP	SLSTSDHASY	VALNLEVALL	CAGTVLGHLL	EENR--WNE
AtNHX2	MSIGLTFEVT	NKLAABHPOV	IPISVEIATL	CLCLVIGHLL	EENR--WNE
AtNHX3	-----	-----	-----MML	VLSFVLGHVL	RRRHFHLLPE
AtNHX1	SITALLIGLG	TCVTILLISK	GKSS-HILVF	SECLFFIYLL	PPIIFNAGFO
AtNHX2	SITAILVGAA	SGTVILLISK	GKSS-HILVF	DEELFFIYLL	PPIIFNAGFO
AtNHX3	ASGSLIGLI	VCILANISDT	ETSIRTWENE	HEEFFFLELL	PPIIFOSGES
AtNHX1	VKKKOFERNE	VTIMLFGAVG	TIISCTIISL	GVTOFFKKLD	IGTFDLGDYL
AtNHX2	VKKKKEFHNE	LTIMSFGVIG	VFISTVIISF	GTWWLFPKLG	FKGLSARDYL
AtNHX3	LQPKFEFSNE	GAVTFAILG	TFVASVVTGG	LVYLGGSMYL	MYKLPFVCL
AtNHX1	AICATFAATD	SVCTLOVLNQ	DETPL-LYSL	VFGEGVVNDA	TSVVFNENMQ
AtNHX2	AICTIFSSTD	TVCTLOILRO	DETPL-LYSL	VFGEGVVNDA	TSVVFNENMQ
AtNHX3	MFGALISATD	PVTVLSIFQD	VCTOVNLYAL	VFGESVLNDA	MAISLRTES
AtNHX1	SFDLTHLNHE	AAEHLLCNFL	YLFLLSTLLG	AATGLISAYV	IKKLYFG-RH
AtNHX2	KIQFESLTGW	TALQVEGNFL	YLFSTSTLLG	IGVGLITSEV	IKKLYFG-RH
AtNHX3	LVNROSSSGE	HFFMVVIREF	ETFAGSMSAG	VGVGFTSALL	EKYAGLDTEN
AtNHX1	STOREVALMM	LMAYLSYMLA	ELEFSLGILT	VFFCGIVMSH	YTWENVTESS
AtNHX2	STTRELAIMV	LMAYLSYMLA	ELEFSLGILT	VFFCGVIMSH	YASYNVTESS
AtNHX3	LONLECCLFV	LFFYESYMLA	EGVGLSGIVS	ILETGIVMKR	YTESNTESS
AtNHX1	RITTKHTFAT	LSFLAETFIF	LYVGMD-ALD	IDKWRVSDT	EGTSLAVSSI
AtNHX2	RITSRHVFEAM	LSFLAETFIF	LYVGTD-ALD	FTKWKTSLS	EGGTGLVSG
AtNHX3	QSFVSSFHLL	ISSLAETETE	IYMGFDIAME	QHSWSHVG--	FILESISSSF
AtNHX1	EMGLVMVGRA	AFVFPLSFLS	NLAKKNQ--S	EKINENMOVV	IWWSGIMRGA
AtNHX2	ITALVLLGRA	AFVFPLSVLT	NFMNRHTERN	ESITEKHQVI	IWWAGIMRGA
AtNHX3	TDRQ-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
AtNHX1	VSMALAYNKE	TRAGHTDVRG	NAIMITSTIT	VCLFSTVVEG	MLTKPLIAYL
AtNHX2	VSIALAFKQE	TYSGVTLDPV	NAAMVINTTI	VVLETLVVEG	FLTKPLIAYL
AtNHX3	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
AtNHX1	LPHQNTTSM	LSDDNTPKSI	HIP--LDDQD	SEIEPSGNHN	VPRPDSIRGF
AtNHX2	LPODASHNTG	NRGKRTEPGS	PKEDATPLL	SEDSASTNF	NRARDSISLL
AtNHX3	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
AtNHX1	QTRPTRTVHY	YWRQFDDSEM	REVEGGRGFV	PFVPGSPTER	NPPDLKA
AtNHX2	MEQPVYTHR	YWRKFDDTYM	REIEGGRPRE	NQPEC-----	-----
AtNHX3	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Figure 2b

A <sub>t</sub> NHX3	MMLVLSFVLG	HVLRRRHRFHY	LPEASGSLLI	GLIVGILANI	SDTETSIRTW
A <sub>t</sub> NHX4	MMLVLSFVLG	HVLRRRHRFHY	LPEASGSLLI	GLIVGILANI	SDTETSIRTW
A <sub>t</sub> NHX3	FNFHEEFFFFL	FLLPPIIFQS	GFSLQPKPFF	SNFGAIVTFA	IIGTEVASVV
A <sub>t</sub> NHX4	FNFHEEFFFFL	FLLPPIIFQS	GFSLQPKPFF	SNFGAIVTFA	IIGTEVASVV
A <sub>t</sub> NHX3	TGGLVYLGG	MYLMYKLPFV	ECLMFGALIS	ATDPVTVLSI	FQDVGTDVNL
A <sub>t</sub> NHX4	TGGLVYLGG	MYLMYKLPFV	ECLMFGALIS	ATDPVTVLSI	FQDVGTDVNL
A <sub>t</sub> NHX3	VALVFGESVL	NDAMAIISLYR	TMSLVNRQSS	SGEHFFMVVI	RFFETFAGSM
A <sub>t</sub> NHX4	VALVFGESVL	NDAMAIISLYR	TMSLVNRQSS	SGEHFFMVVI	RFFETFAGSM
A <sub>t</sub> NHX3	SAGVGVGFTS	ALLFKYAGLD	TENLQNLCC	LFVLFPIYFSY	MLAEGVGLSG
A <sub>t</sub> NHX4	SAGVGVGFTS	ALISFLESSI	FLIRCHMAKN	VL-----	-----
A <sub>t</sub> NHX3	IVSILFTGIV	MKRYTFSNLS	EASQSFVSSF	FHLISSLAET	FTFIYMGFDI
A <sub>t</sub> NHX4	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
A <sub>t</sub> NHX3	AMEQHSWSHV	GFILEFSIVSS	FTDRQ		
A <sub>t</sub> NHX4	-----	-----	-----		

Figure 2c



Figure 3.

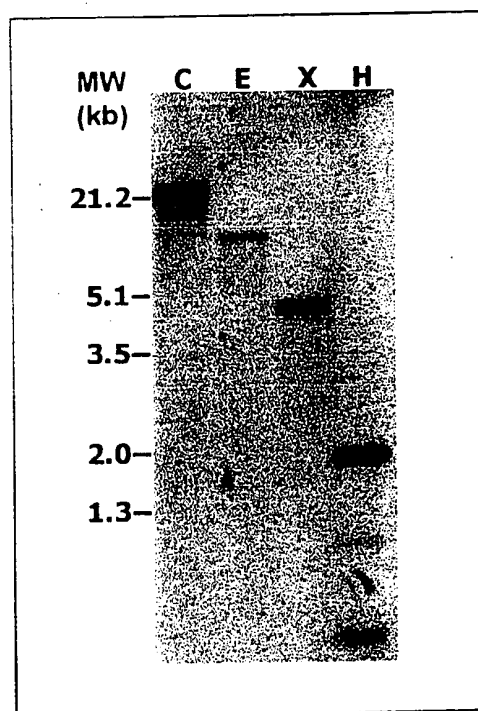
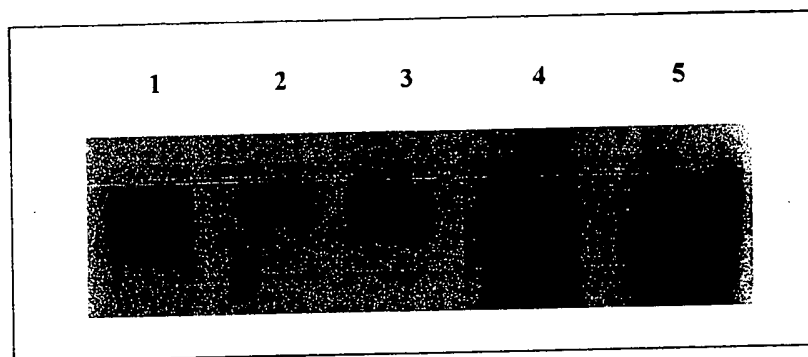


Figure 4.



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 CTTATATATCTTTTCCACCCATTATATTCAATGCAGGGTTTCAAGTAAAAAGAAGCAG  
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Figure 5 (a)

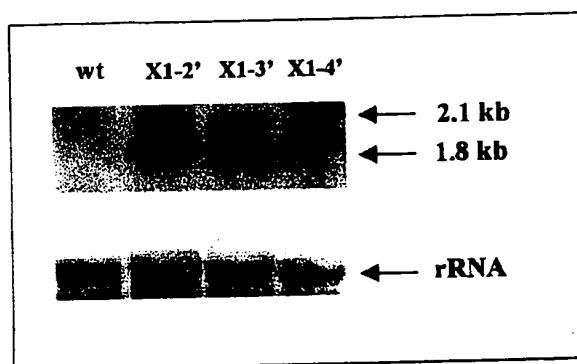
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A L L C A C I V L G H L L E E N R W M N E S I T A L L  
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I G L G T G V T I L L I S K G K S S H L L V F S E D L  
TTCTCATATATCTTTTGGCCACCCTATATATTCATGCAAGGTTTCMAGTAAVAVAGAGAGTTTTCGCAATTTTCGTG 324  
P F I X L L P P I I F N A G F Q V K K Q F F R N F V  
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T I M L F G A V G T I I S C T I I S L G V T Q F E K K  
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L D I G T F D L G D Y L A I G A I F A A T D S V C T L  
CAGTTCTGATCAGACAGACACCTTTGCTTTACAGTCTTGTATTGGAGAGGGTGTGTGATGATGCAACGTCAGTT 567  
Q V L N Q D E T P L L Y S L V F G E G V V N D A T S V  
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Figure 5(b) (continued on next page)

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 S G I L T V E F C G I V M S H Y T W H N V T E S S R I  
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Figure 5(b). (continued)

Figure 6.



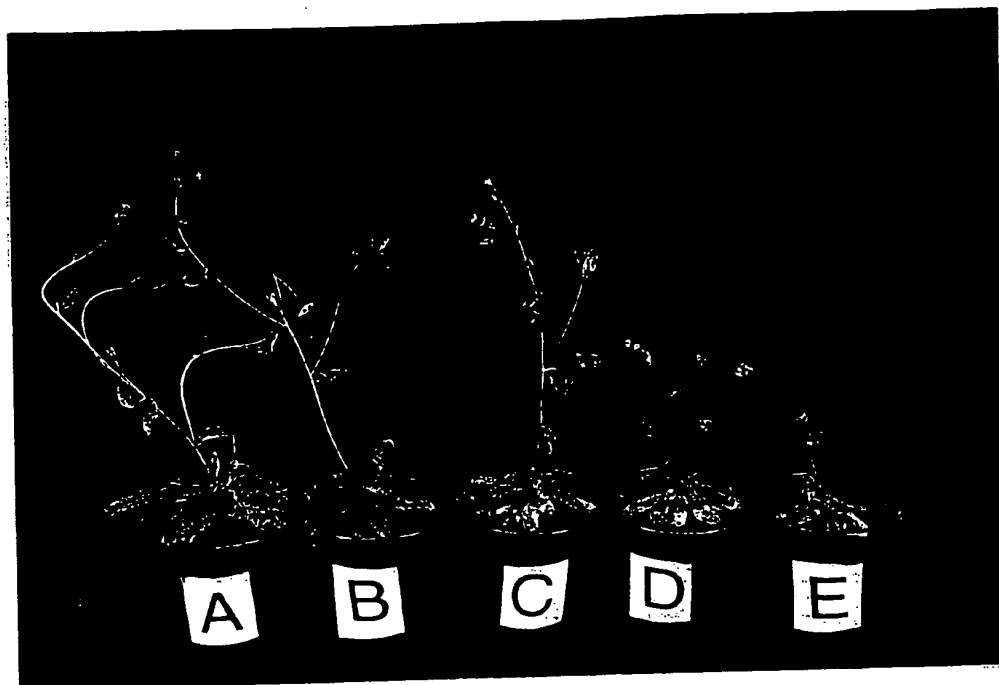


Figure 7(a)

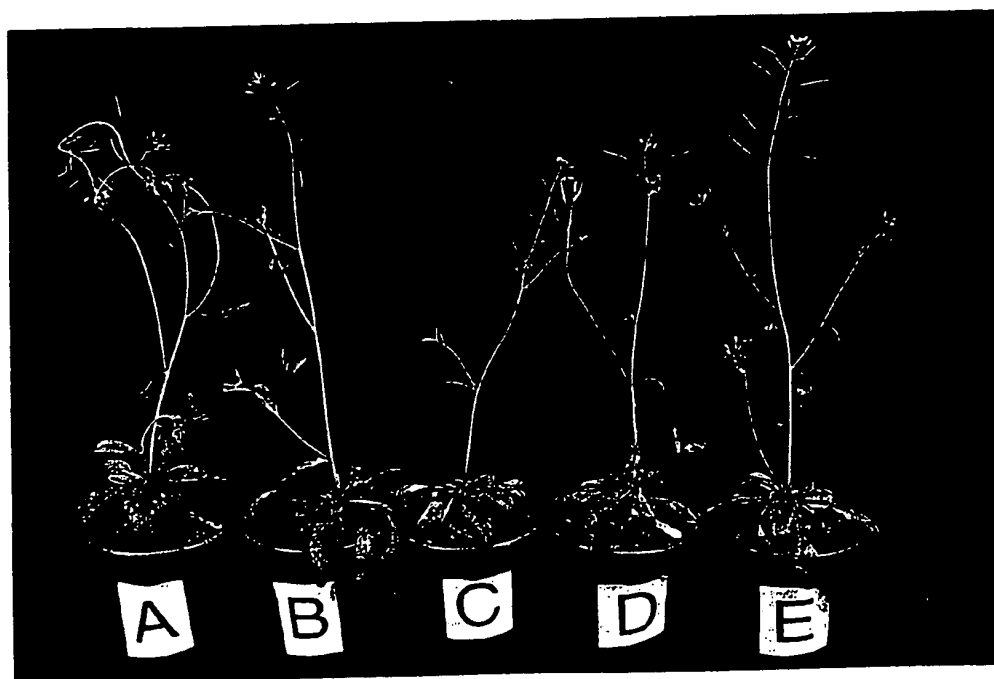


Figure 7(b)

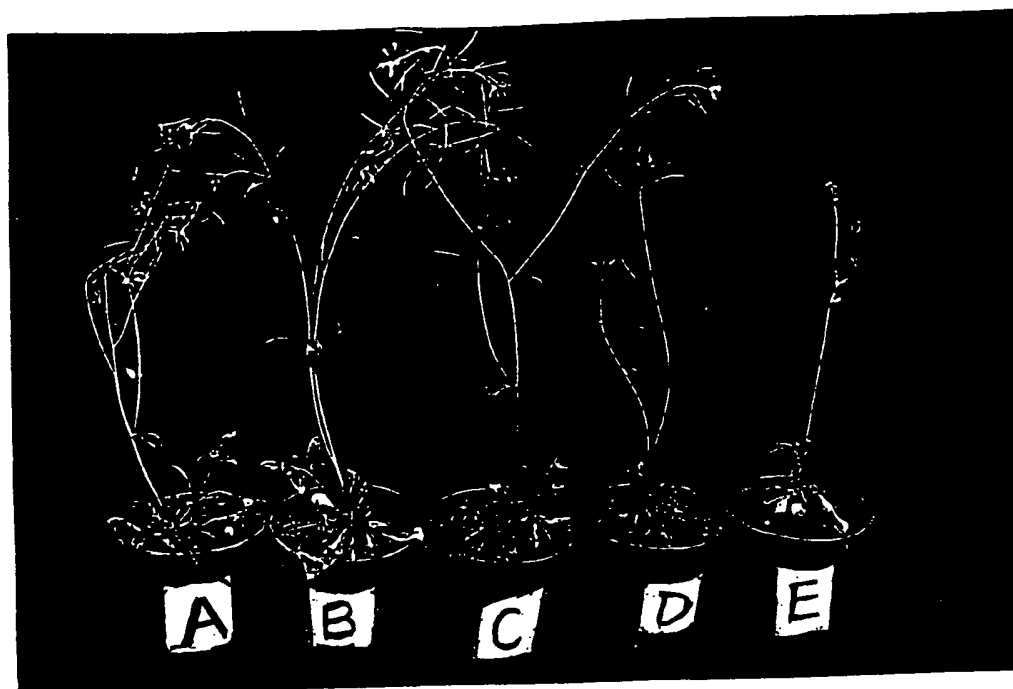


Figure 7(c)



Figure 7(d)



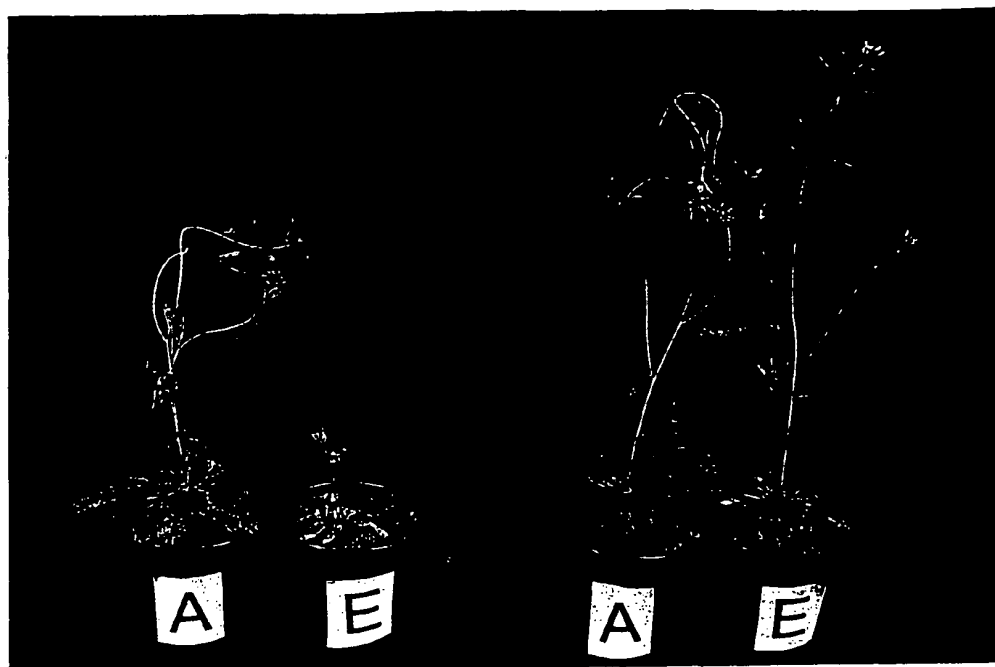


Figure 7(e)

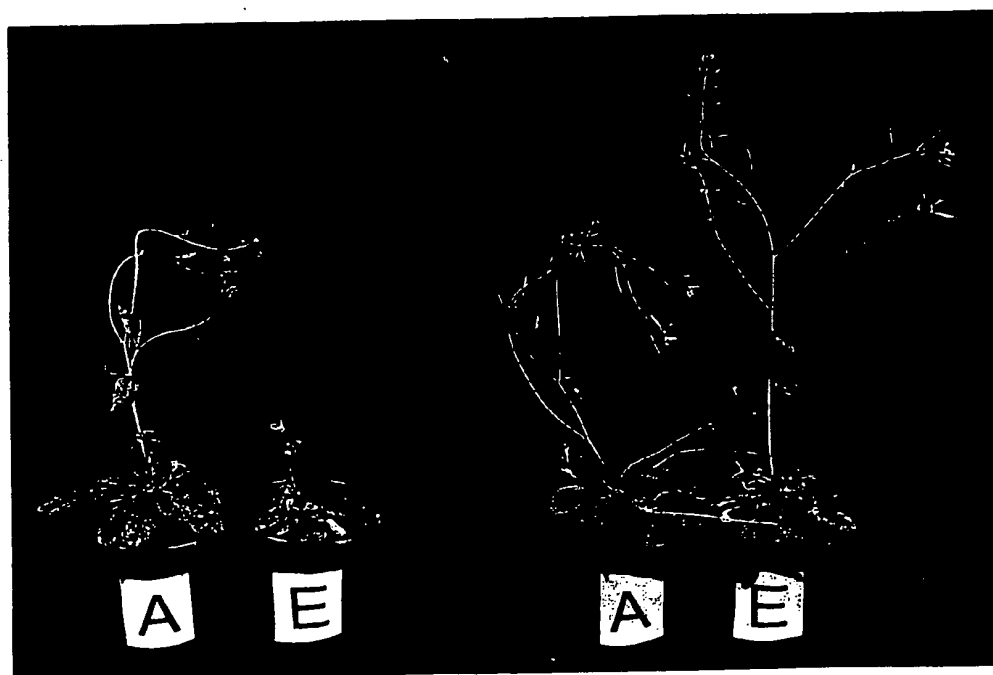


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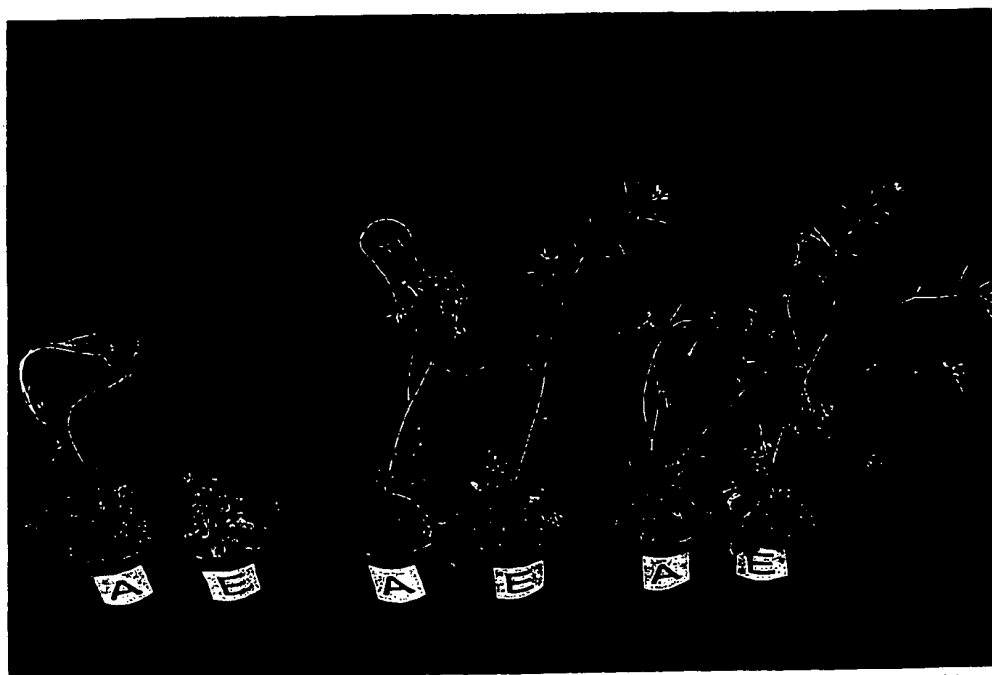


Figure 7(g)

Figure 8(a)

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121 rnigtltfa fagtffisavt lgvlyyifsf lnfenlsmtf vealsmgatl satdpvtvla
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241 lligvsigli talllkysyl rrypsiesci illmaytsyf fsngchmsgv vsllfcgitl
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```

Figure 8(b)

[SEQ ID NO:22]

```

1 mlskvllnia fkvllttakr avdpdddel lpspdlpgsd dpiagdpsvd lnpvteemfs
61 swalfimlll lisalwssyy ltqkriravh etvlsifygm vigliirmsp ghyiqdvtvf
121 nssyffnvll ppiilnsgye lnqvnffnm lsilifaipg tfisavvigi ilyiwtflgl
181 esidisfada msvgatlsat dpvtilsifn aykvdpklyt iifgesllnd aisivmfetc
241 qkfhhgqpatf ssvfegaglf lmtfsvslli gvliligilval llkhthirry pqiesclill
301 iayesyffsn gchmsgivsl lfcgitlkhy aaynmsrrsq itikyifqll arlsenfifi
361 ylglelftev elvykpllii vaaisicvar wcavfplsqr vnwlrvvkti rsmmsgitgen
421 isvpdeipyn yqmmftwagl rgavgvalal giggeykftl latvlvvvvl tviifgggta
481 gmlevlnikt gciseedtsd defdieapra inllngssiq tdlgpysdnn spdisidqfa
541 vssnknlpnn isttgntfg glnetentsp nparssmdkr nlrklgtif nsdsqwfqnf
601 deqvlkpvlfn dnvspslqds atqspadfs qnh

```

Figure 8(c)

[SEQ ID NO:23]

```

1 caagaagcta tacattggaa ggcattctac tgaccgtgag gttgccctta tgatgctcat
61 ggcttacctt tcatatatgc tggctgagtt gctagatttg agcggcattc tcaccgtatt
121 cttcttggtt attgtaattg cacattacac ttggcataac gtcacagaga gttcaagagt
181 tacaacaaag cagcatttg caactctgtc cttcattgct gagacttttc tcttctgta
241 tggtgggatg gatgcattgg atattgaaaa atgggagntt nccagtgaca gacctggnaa
301 atccattngg gtaagctcaa ttttgctagg gattgggtcc tgattggaag ngctgctttt
361 gnaattcccc tggtggtc

```

Figure 8(d)

[SEQ ID NO:24]

```
1 gtttggtaat tggaggaggt ggagtaatgg agctcgggtt ggggatgggg atggggctgg
61 gcgacccgnc tgcggactac ggctcgatcg cggcgggtggg gatgttcgtg gcgctcatct
121 gcgtctgcat cgtcgtcggc cacctcctcg aggagagccg atggatgaac gagtccatca
181 ccgcgctaata catcggttg ggtacttgga ggagtgnntt tgnatggtgt cgagctggaa
241 gcactcggna tactggtgtt cagcgagg
```

Figure 8(e)

[SEQ ID NO:25]

```
1 acattccctg aaagnactgc tggacntttg agggctcgga tgctgtaga tccaggactc
61 aaaggatgnt gagctagagg ttgttgggat ggtgaagttt gcttaccaag ggccatttac
121 attgtctggc atcaaactat gccagccac tgatggcacg gctcagttta atgaggctgg
181 ccacaccttc tccagtggga gttatctgtg catctaattg gtaccttctt tgtattgtag
241 ttgttacttt acccttgatt tgttcgggtt gttcttaaag cagggtgtga aattcctatt
301 gtatgtngtg acgcttggtt gttttttgag gctggaaatt acatcatggt tttgatttgt
361 ctattaaaaa aaaaaaaaaa
```

Figure 8(f)

[SEQ ID NO:26]

```
1 gtcaaaactc atccctcctc ttccatttgc atattcttct ttatcatctt ttcttccta
61 aattagagtc tatccttccg cccatagttt ttgacaccct tttcaaaatt ctagaacaag
121 aattttattc ttcatatata tatatatata tatccaatta accatctcaa tctcatattc
181 acatatacct cataaaccat ccataacatc cttaaaaacc ctctaagccc tttcaaactt
241 tgatttgtaa ttgtttctct tataagtctt aacctgcaca aatcaatttt aatttcttat
301 gttcatatag ttatgaatga ttgaaaaaaa cacaaatgac tccagttatc tgtgagatct
361 ctatgataaa ctctactctc cagacgcagg acacatttag ttcaatcttt ctctgttggt
421 ttcctctact ggttctatat tttctcatga attattaatt aatcctatat tctttctttt
481 caatacaaat ttagtttcat taattctatc aacataatca attaaactac atagttagaa
541 aaatagtact attaccacga tcactcaaag ttttttagtt ttaacaaac antctg
```

Figure 8(g)

[SEQ ID NO:27]

```
1 atttacatgg ttataccagt tatcttgagc acttatgcat catccagtga tcagttttgc
61 ttccattcag actgatgggt ctggcagaag taatgtattc tgggtggactt acatctatca
121 gcgatgatga aacttgatga tcagtttttt tagttgaaaa attctgcaag aacagctact
181 taatgctcta ttgtgtatcg caggcacaca tcagctgctg atgtctgcta tacttctgta
241 ctctcactat agctcatcta tgacgtctag acatgctagc gtatgtgtan nnnacatcgc
301 gctagtatgt atactctcac atcatatgct actgttctat atagaactat gtgatagcta
361 ctgtataact gctgtcatac agagtcccggt taatatcaat gctattttgc tttcctcaaa
421 gaaaaaagga aatgactttc cttttgatta tatatttgat ccaggttttc ggcttgctga
481 ctaagcctct gattaatctc ctcgccccac caagacctgg ca
```

Figure 8(h)

[SEQ ID NO:28]

```
1 tttccgttat cgtttctatc taacttagcc aagaagaatc aaagcgagaa aatcaacttt
61 aacatgcagg ttgtgatttg gtggctctggt ctcatgagag gtgctgtatc tatggctctt
121 gcatacaaca agtttacaag ggccgggcac acagatgtac gngggaaatgc aatcatgac
181 acngttagcn taactgtctg tnttttttagc acagtgggtgt ttggtagct gaccaaacca
241 ntcataagct acctatttac cgnaccanga accgtcatca acngggcatg tttatcttgn
301 attncaaata acccnaanaa tccnatacca
```

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INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 6 : <b>C12N 15/29, 15/11, 15/81, 15/82, 5/10, 1/19, C07K 14/415, 16/16, A01H 5/00, 5/10</b>		A3	(11) International Publication Number: <b>WO 99/47679</b> (43) International Publication Date: 23 September 1999 (23.09.99)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/CA99/00219 (22) International Filing Date: 18 March 1999 (18.03.99)		(74) Agent: DEETH WILLIAMS WALL; National Bank Building, Suite 400, 150 York Street, Toronto, Ontario M5H 3S5 (CA).	
(30) Priority Data: 60/078,474 18 March 1998 (18.03.98) US 60/116,111 15 January 1999 (15.01.99) US		(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).	
(63) Related by Continuation (CON) or Continuation-in-Part (CIP) to Earlier Applications US 60/078,474 (CIP) Filed on 18 March 1998 (18.03.98) US 60/116,111 (CIP) Filed on 15 January 1999 (15.01.99)		Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i>	
(71)(72) Applicants and Inventors: BLUMWALD, Eduardo [CA/CA]; 434 Roxton Road, Toronto, Ontario M6G 3R4 (CA). APSE, Maris [CA/CA]; 292 Withrow Avenue, Upper Unit, Toronto, Ontario M4J 1B7 (CA). SNEDDEN, Wayne [CA/CA]; 208 Poplar Plains Road, Toronto, Ontario M4V 2N4 (CA). AHARON, Gilad [CA/CA]; 69 Dewlane Drive, Willowdale, Ontario M2R 2P9 (CA).		(88) Date of publication of the international search report: 25 November 1999 (25.11.99)	
(54) Title: GENETIC ENGINEERING SALT TOLERANCE IN CROP PLANTS			
(57) Abstract <p>The invention is isolated nucleic acid molecules encoding Na<sup>+</sup>/H<sup>+</sup> exchanger polypeptides for extrusion of monovalent cations (preferably lithium ions and potassium ions, most preferably sodium ions) from the cytosol of cells to provide the cell with increased salt tolerance. In a preferred embodiment, the nucleic acid is obtained from <i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i>. Crop species transformed with the nucleic acid molecule are capable of surviving in soil with high salt levels that would normally inhibit growth of the crop species.</p>			

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International Application No

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## A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 6 C12N15/29 C12N15/11 C12N15/81 C12N15/82 C12N5/10  
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Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

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## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	BARKLA, BRONWYN J. ET AL: "The plant vacuolar Na <sup>+</sup> /H <sup>+</sup> antiport" SYMP. SOC. EXP. BIOL. (1994), VOLUME DATE 1993, 48, 141-53, XP002117177 see esp. p.147 ff.	1,12-14, 17,19, 20,26, 33,34,45
X	WO 91 06651 A (UNIV KINGSTON) 16 May 1991 (1991-05-16)	53,54
Y	see esp. p.27 ff.	27-32, 53,54
X	DANTE M. ET AL.: "AC 004655" EMBL DATABASE, 1 July 1997 (1997-07-01), XP002117178 Heidelberg	1-15,17, 19,20, 26,31, 33-52
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		AU 6542390 A	31-05-1991
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A	RAUSCH, THOMAS ET AL: "Salt stress responses of higher plants: The role of proton pumps and Na <sup>+</sup> /H <sup>+</sup> -antiporters." JOURNAL OF PLANT PHYSIOLOGY, (1996) VOL. 148, NO. 3-4, PP. 425-433. , XP002117184 the whole document	1-53
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T	--- APSE, MARIS P. ET AL: "Salt tolerance conferred by overexpression of a vacuolar Na <sup>+</sup> /H <sup>+</sup> antiport in Arabidopsis" SCIENCE (WASHINGTON, D. C.) (1999), 285(5431), 1256-1258 , XP002117186 the whole document -----	1-53